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Bilingual Inscriptions from India: A Study of 12th-Century Persian and Indic Language-Based Stone Inscriptions

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ABSTRACT: Multilingualism and multiscriptuality are omnipresent in today's India: different languages in various scripts are found on street signs and bank- notes, in metro stations, public buildings and many other places.[1] However, despite the omnipresence of contemporary multilingual texts, examples from premodern India are much less frequent. The following article will shed light on one specific type of multilingual text from the premodern and early modern period: epigraphic documents. There are multiple combinations of languages and scripts in Indian epigraphy, but this article will focus only on combinations of Indic languages and scripts with texts in Arabic oPersian.

The present article offers the edition of the Sujanagar stone inscription of the time of Bhojavarman, year 7, with notes and translation, and the discussion on its contents and implications. The inscription records the two acts of *mahăsămanta* Avŭdeva, a subordinate ruler of Bhojavarman, in relation to a religious institution called a *vihăra* protected by Allahabha??ărakasvămin, namely, the withdrawal of cash endowment and the donation of right to tax at a market. It is the sole inscription mentioning the activity of a subordinate ruler under the Varmans. The transactions recorded in it attests to the developed monetary economy based on cowrie-shells. The inscription can also be the earliest epigraphic evidence for the presence of Islam and Muslims in Bengal, with possible references to a subordinate ruler from Arab or Persian merchant family and his establishment of a madrasa, though we need more evidence to buttress this possibility.

KEYWORDS : Bengal, inscription, twelfth century, the Varmans, subordinate ruler, monetary economy, Islam.

Contributors

Introduction

The inscription to be dealt with in the present article is the one currently kept at Bangladesh National Museum with Accession Number E-67.232. It is an inscription engraved on a thick slab of black stone, 43 cm long and 31 cm wide, of which a portion was broken off at the lower right corner. The inscription was discovered by an accidental digging at village Sujanagar in Sadar *upazila* of Munshiganj district, Bangladesh, and acquired by the museum in 1967 (Biswas 2007; Islam 2010: 113). The stone is inscribed lengthways in nine lines and has an image of a four-legged animal facing left engraved at the lower left corner (Plate 1). The script used in the inscription is Gauḍī datable to the twelfth century, and this dating is supported by the reference to *mahārājādhirāja* Bhojavarman as a reigning king. The engraving is rather shallow and partly disturbed by cracks and scratches on the surface of the slab. Despite that, the *ak?ara*s are mostly readable except the two in lines 3 and 4, of which the shapes pose some difficulty for identification. The language is Sanskrit, mostly correct and comprehensible but showing some orthographical and grammatical irregularities mistakes in some parts, as mentioned in the notes to the text.

The inscription was first notified by Swapan Kumar Biswas (Biswas 2007). Then late Shariful Islam attempted at its decipherment and edition (Islam,
2010). However, he could not read the inscription properly and his discussion went astray due to the undue attachment to the image of animal, which he wrongly identified as a dog despite that he correctly transcribed a reference to ass (*gardabha*) in the inscription (Islam 2010: 117).[1] As a result, the inscription is yet to be properly deciphered and its contents, which have critical bearings on the early medieval history of Bengal, have not been published. In this article, I will provide an edition of the inscription with textual notes and translation, and discuss the contents of the inscription and their implications for the history of early medieval Bengal.

Edition of Inscription

Editorial Convention

(…) : elements not present but added by the editor like line numbers.

[…] : *ak?ara*s unclear but readable in close-up or reconstructed on conjecture.

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PLATE 1: Sujanagar stone inscription of the time of Bhojavarman, Year 7 (Acc. no. E-67.232). The photograph taken by the author on 22 July 2017 (*Courtesy*: Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka)

* : indicating omission of inherent vowel from consonant by a special form of *ak?ara*.
˚ : indicating independent vowel.

Text

(1) [siddham] mahărăjădhirăjaśrīmadbhoja-
varmmadevapădīyasamvat* 7 [kha]
(2) sŭryyagatyă jyai??hadine 21
˚adhikrtaśrījīvasenavyăpăre părade-
(3) śikasamastajñătīnăm anumatyă
păñcakulikahăsī[su]tamahă-
(4) sămantaśrī˚avŭdevena jñătrīnăṇ
rak?aṇărthaṇ śaṇkhakara[pră]prahară-
(5) khaṇḍ'ităvărttikakapardakadănaṇ ca
khaṇḍ'itaṇ ˚allahabha??ărakasvămi-
(6) jaṅśitavihărapratikaraṇărthaṇ
svakīyamahăsămantabhogaha??a-
(7) grahakḷptaṇ ca dattam iti ˚etăṇ kīrttiṇ ye
paripălayanti te?ăm e?o
(8) dharmmaṆ tadīyapărśve ca śuddhăñjalir
mmateti ye punar anyathă kurvanti
(9) gardabhas te?ăṇ piteti :‖

Notes to the Text

Line 1 [siddham] expressed by a symbol, a loop open to the left. [kha]: there is an *ak?ara* like *kha*, which could be a mark of punctuation in view of the colophon of a manuscript of the *Vimalaprabhă* dated year 39 of the reign of Harivarman, where the year and the word *suryagatyă* is demarcated by a *dapḍa* (Sanderson 2009: 82, note 136).
Line 4 śaṇkhakara˚: emend śaṇkhakăra. ˚[pră] prahară: the first *ak?ara* and meaning unclear, tentatively emend prăptahără.
Line 6 jaṅśita˚: emend jaṇsita.
Line 8 mmateti: emend măteti.[2]

Line 9 The two dots placed vertically, which resembles *visarga*, seems to denote punctuation, as we sometimes encounter in the other inscriptions (Bhattacharya 1999: 390, n. 5).

Translation

Success! In the year seven of his majesty *mahărăjădhirăja* illustrious Bhojavarmadeva, on the day 21 of month Jyai??ha by the movement of the Sun, during the administration of the appointed official (*adhikṛta*) Jīvasena (ll. 1–2).[3] With the assent of all the kinsmen of the other countries, by *mahăsămanta* illustrious Avŭdeva, the son of *păñcakulika* Hăsī, for the protection of sureties, the donation of unbroken circulating cowrie- shells, which was incurred of loss by conch-shell workers, was broken, and for repairs of the *vihăra* protected by Allahabha??ărakasvămin, fixed tax on seizing at market, which was (Avŭdeva's) own enjoyment (*bhoga*) as *mahăsămanta*, was given (ll. 2–7). For those who protect this pious deed, there would be this religious merit. On the side of them, the mother will be the one making pure salutation (ll. 7–8). The father of those who do otherwise again will be an ass (ll. 8–9).

Discussions

Contents of the Inscription

The inscription records the two acts by *mahăsămanta* Avŭdeva in connection with a religious institution. The time of the acts is said to be in the seventh year of the reign of king Bhojavarman (l. 1). The title of *mahărăjădhirăja* and the find-spot locatable in the sub-region of Vaṅga points to his identification with the Varman king of the same name known from the Belava Copperplate Inscription, dated year 5 of his reign (Majumdar 1929: 14–24). It places the date of the inscription to the middle of the twelfth century.

What is notable about the date in this inscription is the expression 'by the movement of the sun' (*suryagatyă*) preceding the month and day, Jyai??ha 21 (l. 2). It clearly indicates the use of solar dates, which is presumed by the number of days larger than 15 and the absence of the reference to *pak?a* (fortnight).[4] The same expression is also used in a manuscript of the *Vimalaprabhă* mentioning the 39th year of the reign of *mahărăjădhirăja* Harivarman, the Mainamati grant of Dadhieva mentioning the reign of Harikăladeva and the Sobharampur plate of Dămodaradeva (Sanderson 2009: 82, note 136; Bhattacharyya 1933: 287, l. 24; Dani 1953–4: 188, l. 35).[5] The prevalence of solar dates in early Bengal could be conjectured by the absence of *pak?a* and the occurrence of days larger than 15 in most of the inscriptions, with a few exceptions clearly referring to the lunar dates.[6] The four cases including the present inscription provide a clear evidence for its use in the eastern part of Bengal in the period between the second half of the eleventh century and the early thirteenth century.

The time of the acts is also stated in reference to the administration of Jīvasena, the appointed official (*adhikṛta*) (l. 2). The fact that the inscription presumably commissioned by *mahăsămanta* Avŭdeva had to mention not only the reign of Bhojavarman but also the administration of Jīvasena shows the position of the latter superior to Avŭdeva and the presence of an appointed official between the king and his subordinate ruler.

As is evident from his title, *mahăsămanta* Avŭdeva, the protagonist of the inscription, was a subordinate ruler of Bhojavarman (l. 4). His father Hăsī was *păñcakulika* (l. 3), a leader or a member of *pañcakula* which denoted an urban administrative organization in charge of documentary works and exchange centre called *mapḍapikă*, mainly consisting of urban influential people, according to the inscriptional evidences of the early medieval western India (Sircar 1966: 230; Mita 2017: 62–72). It indicates the urban or rather mercantile background of Avŭdeva, whose kinsmen were located abroad and possibly engaging in commercial activities, as will be discussed below.

The two acts of Avŭdeva recorded in the inscription are breaking 'the donation of unbroken circulating cowrie-shells' for the

protection of sureties and donating ‘fixed tax on seizing at market’ for the repairs of a *vihăra* (ll. 4–7). The appearance of both the acts in the same inscription suggests their interconnection.

As for the first act (ll. 4–5), ‘donation of unbroken circulating cowries’ (*akhapḍităvărttika-kapardakadăna*) can be interpreted as monetary endowment of which interest generated by the investment is used for particular purposes without reducing the original capital, in line with the arrangement called *ak?ayanivi*.[7] In the present case, endowment was made in cowrie-shells which would circulate as currency and generate interest without reducing the original amount. Breaking of this donation seems to mean liquidation or withdrawal of the endowed cash. The assent of all the kinsmen required for this act suggests that they collectively raised the fund with Avŭdeva for the endowment. Their location abroad, expressed by the word ‘of the other countries’ (*părade*ṣ*ika*) (ll. 2–3), and the supposed monetary contribution point to their commercial activities based on the kinship relation, which may have formed a trade network. Avŭdeva could communicate with them through this network to gain their assent.

The cause of the liquidation of endowment can be conjectured from the word *ṣamkhakara*[*pră*] *prahara*, which is emended to *ṣamkhakăraprăptahăra*, ‘incurred of loss by conch-shell workers’, and the purpose stated as ‘for the protection of sureties’ (l. 4). The sequence of events can be reconstructed as follows: The fund of cowrie-shells was given to the *vihăra* protected by Allahabha??ărakasvămin, the religious institution for which the second act of Avŭdeva was made. The fund had to be invested for interest, and conch-shell workers were deposited of it with appointment of sureties. However, the conch-shell workers incurred loss on the original capital, for which the sureties were required to compensate. To exempt the latter from this liability and cover the loss, Avŭdeva once liquidated the endowment and made an alternative arrangement for the religious institution.

The second act, namely, the donation for the repairs of the *vihăra*, was the alternative arrangement necessitated by the liquidation (ll. 5–7). The object of donation is called ‘fixed tax on seizing at market’ (*hattagrahaklpta*), which seems to denote tax on seized or confiscated commodities charged at a market.[8] Notably, it is said to be his own enjoyment (*bhoga*) as *mahăsămanta*, meaning that the right to charge this tax was held by Avŭdeva as a privilege accompanying his position. The donation in this case denotes the transference of this right to the religious institution in lieu of the withdrawn monetary fund.

In view of the purpose of donation, the donee was presumed to be the *vihăra* protected by the deity called Allahabha??ărakasvămin (ll. 5–6). The name of the deity and the choice of *vihăra* as a term denoting an institution associated with him, not *devakula*, *ăyatana* or *matha* which are generally applied to an abode of Brahmanical deities, indicates their special character. The former may be Allah, the Islamic God, and the latter a *madrasa*, the theological school for which the term denoting a centre for learning and other activities of Buddhists was chosen due to similarity in functions.

Arabic and Persian inscriptions are an important source of information on Mus- lim rule in India. They are found on epitaphs, wells, walls, tablets, pillars and copper plates, in mosques and other places. The vast majority of the several thousand inscriptions so far discovered and published are monolingual or in a mixture of Persian and Arabic. The latter combination will not be considered as bilingual or multilingual, since the insertion of Arabic expressions into Persian is very frequent.[2] Rather, the bilingual texts studied in this article are combina- tions of Arabic or Persian with Indic languages, mainly Sanskrit. In a prelimi- nary survey of the inscriptions published in the *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica* and its continuation, *Epigraphia Indica: Arabic and Persian Supplement*, from 1907 to 2011, sixty-three bilingual and three trilingual inscriptions have been

recorded. Another bilingual and one more trilingual inscription are included in the Siddham database,[3] and eight further inscriptions are contained in other publi- cations. The total number of inscriptions considered here is thus seventy-six.

Most of the examples I will present contain texts in two different scripts and two different languages. In spite of the use of two different scripts, these texts are not biscriptal, but bilingual, as only monolingual texts in two different scripts are biscriptal by definition;[4] the only texts in this category are direction stones with Persian in Arabic and Nāgarī characters.[5] In the inscriptions consid- ered below, one script is always Arabic, the other an Indian script.

Unfortunately, not all of these inscriptions have been fully edited, and in quite a few cases, we either lack photos of part of the inscription, or the quality of the reproduction is very poor. In many cases, the texts of the inscriptions have been published separately by language, with the Persian or Arabic text in one journal, the Sanskrit text in another. Because only rarely, all the necessary linguistic competences are found with one scholar, the texts have also been studied by different scholars,[6] and in most cases, the relationship between the two texts of the same bilingual inscription has not been examined. Two recent studies however address this question: while Soroni's study examines the cor- pus of inscriptions in Persian and Marathi,[7] Sheikh looks at the corpus of bilin- gual inscriptions from Gujarat.[8]

In my article, I attempt to give an overview of the entire corpus of bilingual inscriptions that join Arabic/Persian with an Indic language from the subconti- nent. The goal is to formulate a broader idea of how these languages have been combined, what visual effects were produced, and how the hierarchy between languages was expressed. The comparison will show that in spite of the vast geographical and historical provenance of the inscriptions, their visual design was often similar. Two points are striking: given the dominance of Persian as an official language in many regions of India over a vast period, we would expect Persian and Arabic to be visually dominant in the inscriptions as well. While this is often the case, we also find many inscriptions in which the Persian and Arabic text is at the top of the inscription, but of equal size or even shorter than the Indic text. This broad overview cannot address the political and social con- text in which the single inscriptions were produced; it is rather meant as a pre-

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1 For good examples, see e.g. the images in Brandt 2014.

2 I am not referring here to the many Arabic loanwords in Persian, but to Arabic phrases – in many cases from the Quran or Ḥadīth (records of the words and deeds of Muḥammad) – that have been included in Persian texts; Arabic eulogies or numbers are also common. In some cases, we even find Arabic poetry. See also Sheikh 2014, 189 for the same approach.

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3 https://siddham.network/ (accessed on 4 September 2023).

4 Bunčić 2016, 51–54.

5 See below, Subsection 4.6.

6 Soroni 2022, 2.

7 Soroni 2022.

8 Sheikh 2014.

liminary attempt to present the corpus and a starting point for further studies on bilingual inscriptions from India. It has not been possible to consider every archaeological publication on inscriptions in India, so the corpus can certainly be enlarged, especially by including unpublished inscriptions. The article will describe some general features of the corpus and look at some of the most inter- esting inscriptions in greater detail, considering especially the relations be- tween the texts involved. The historical and social conditions of the inscrip- tions' production are not examined.

Languages

Twenty-eight of the inscriptions studied here – i.e. the majority – are in Persian (with or without some Arabic) and Sanskrit.[9] They are spread over a period of some one thousand years, and come from many different regions of the subcontinent: the Swat valley, Delhi, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Mumbai, the Deccan and other places. Persian-Sanskrit bilingual inscriptions have been produced by various dynasties and rulers, but the corpus contains no Persian-Sanskrit inscriptions from the peri- od of Bābur (r. 1526–1530 CE), Humāyūn (r. 1530–1540 CE, 1555–1556 CE) or Akbar (r. 1556–1605 CE), and only one from Jahāngīr (r. 1605–1627 CE).

There are furthermore five inscriptions in Arabic and Sanskrit.[10] Though few in number, these are among the most interesting bilingual inscriptions, both with regard to their content and their placement (see below). The earliest Ara- bic-Sanskrit bilingual inscription, from the Tochi valley in today's Pakistan, dates to 243 AH / 857 CE; the latest, from Burhānpūr in contemporary Madhya Pradesh, to 997 AH / 1588–1589 CE.

The second largest group are inscriptions in Persian and Marathi: a total of nineteen inscriptions belong to this group.[11] We must however consider that seven of these are directional inscriptions, containing no more than place names, and that among these directional inscriptions, five consist mainly of transliterated Persian, written in Nāgarī script. One inscription in Arabic and a mixture of Gujarati and Marathi has also been preserved.[12] The majority of Per-

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9 Persian and Sanskrit: 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 27, 29, 30, 32, 37, 58, 70, 74,

76; Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit: 18, 24, 38, 63, 70.

10 Arabic and Sanskrit: 2, 4, 26, 44, 46.

11 Persian and Marathi: 7, 35, 42, 43, 47, 48, 49, 56, 57, 65, 72, 73, 75; transliterated Persian:

50, 51, 52, 53, 55; Persian, Marathi and Kannada: 36, 60.

12 Arabic with a mixture of Marathi and Gujarati: 11.

sian and Marathi inscriptions belongs to the Niẓām Shāhī period (1490–1636 CE) and comes from this dynasty's realm.[13]

We furthermore find inscriptions in Persian and Telugu,[14] Persian and Raja- sthani,[15] Persian and Kannada,[16] Persian and Kanarese,[17] Persian and Moṛi,[18] and Persian and Hindi.[19] For some inscriptions, the language has not been specified. In most of these cases, only the script is indicated (as Nāgarī), with no specifica- tion of the language.[20] In some cases, the second language is a local dialect.[21]

Four multilingual inscriptions also deserve to be mentioned: first and fore- most, the so-called Tarisāppaḷḷi copper plates, which are mainly inscribed in Tamil, but contain signatures in Syriac, Arabic and Pahlavi (no. 1). Another trilingual inscription comes from Sri Lanka; this is in Tamil, Chinese and Per- sian. Further trilingual inscriptions are in Persian, Old Gujarati and Sanskrit and Persian, Marathi and Kannada.[22]

Dating

The inscriptions under study span a period of some one thousand years, with the earliest dating to 850 CE, the latest to 1830 CE. Of course, bilingual inscrip- tions have also been produced after 1830 CE – they are omnipresent in today's India – but the time frame considered here ends with the beginning of direct British rule in 1857 CE. There are only two inscriptions from the ninth century, and one from the eleventh century. The number of inscriptions significantly increases in the fifteenth century, with a peak in the sixteenth century. There is a significant number of inscriptions related to the Niẓām Shāhī dynasty,[23] and

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13 For a study of this corpus, see Soroni 2022.

14 Persian and Telugu: 33, 66, 68.

15 Persian and Rajasthani: 61, 69.

16 Persian and Kannada: 28; Persian, Marathi and Kannada: 36, 60.

17 Persian and Kanarese: 25.

18 Persian and Moṛi: 40.

19 Persian and Hindi: 23.

20 Arabic, Persian and Nāgarī: 38; Persian and Nāgarī: 34, 39, 41, 67; language not specified:

31, 45.

21 Local dialects: 54, 59, 62, 64, 71.

22 Chinese, Tamil and Persian: 16; Persian, Old Gujarati and Sanskrit: 12; Persian, Marathi and Kannada: 36, 60. No. 36 is however rather triscriptal than trilingual, since the Persian is written in Arabic and Nāgarī characters.

23 Nos 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56.

quite a few to different rulers of Gujarat;[24] otherwise, the inscriptions are equally distributed over the different dynasties. The number of bilingual inscriptions from the Mughals is rather low, with the majority of them belonging to the peri- od of Shāh Jahān (r. 1628–1658 CE)[25] and Aurangzēb (r. 1658–1707 CE).[26]

The inscriptions use a number of dating systems. The Arabic and Persian part of the inscriptions is usually dated in Hijrī years. In most cases, the day and the month are indicated. The numbers are mostly written out, but, in some cas- es, they are in Arabic numerals. In a few cases, we also find a chronogram. In- scriptions from the Deccan, namely from the Niẓām Shāhī and ʿĀdil Shāhī (1490–1686 CE) dynasties, indicate the Shuhūr-San, a solar year introduced in the Deccan in 741 AH / 1340 CE.[27] A document from the period of Aurangzēb men- tions the Faṣlī year, a lunisolar year introduced by the third Mughal ruler, Ak- bar, in 1556 CE, mainly for accounting (no. 72).[28]

In the period of Shāh Jahān and Aurangzēb, inscriptions are dated in regnal years. In the Indic versions of the inscriptions, the most widespread dating sys- tem is the Vikrama *saṁvat* calendar, a Hindu lunisolar calendar named after King Vikramāditya, whose era began in 57 CE. The Śaka *saṁvat*, also known as the Śālivāhana Śaka, is also used. Named after King Śālivāhana, it is a lunisolar calendar beginning in 78 CE. The earliest inscription mentions, in Sanskrit, the year [39]32, which belongs to the Laukika or Śāstra era used in the Punjab and Kashmir, beginning in 3076 BCE. The inscription from Prabhas Pātan (no. 4) also contains the Valabhī era, which began 375 years after the Vikrama *saṁvat* era and for which this inscription is an important source.[29] The Siṁha era, which begins in 1113/1114 CE, is also mentioned in the same inscription.[30] The dates are usually very precisely indicated in the Indic version. There are sometimes dis- crepancies, however, of a matter of days or even weeks between the Vikrama or Śaka date and the Hijrī date. This could indicate that the respective inscriptions were installed on different dates.

Another significant difference between the indication of dates in the Arabic or Persian and Indic versions is the placement of the date. In Indic inscriptions, it usually comes at the very beginning, while in the Arabic or Persian version, different places are possible, but it often comes at the end.

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24 Nos 4, 6, 12, 13, 15, 19, 20, 24, 29, 31.

25 Nos 61, 62, 63, 64, 69.

26 Nos 67, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73.

27 On the Shuhūr-San, see Martin 1971.

28 On the Faṣlī year, see Blake 2013, 117–118.

29 Virji 1952, 106.

30 On this era, see Indraji 1896, 176.

Contexts and types of inscriptions

Most of the inscriptions are related to building activities. We thus find inscrip- tions referring to the construction of a tomb;[31] a mosque or minaret;[32] a step well, well or spring;[33] doors and gates;[34]

military structures like walls, fortifica- tions and bastions;[35] cities;[36] gardens;[37] and other buildings.[38] One specific group of inscriptions served as sign posts.[39] Other inscriptions specify the details of endowments and grants,[40] refer to the cultivation of land[41] or indicate the con- tent of *farmāns* (royal orders), tax regulations and other instructions.[42] We also find an epitaph (no. 11) and a description of offerings by the Chinese emperor (no. 16). The types of inscriptions do not differ very much from monolingual inscriptions. However, religious inscriptions are not very prominent, and nei- ther epitaphs nor inscriptions in mosques are present in large number.

The original placement of the inscriptions was related to their content. Those that are still *in situ* are usually located in close proximity to the object referred to in the inscription, like on the wall of a well, the battlement of a forti- fication, or somewhere in the mosque.

Stylistic features and arrangement

The placement of the two or sometimes three languages in the inscriptions is not always the same, but one can identify some recurrent patterns. These differ in terms of period, the languages involved and the respective dynasty. The in- scriptions also vary in terms of how they are made. Traditionally, Indic texts are incised, and Persian/Arabic texts are in relief. In the bilingual inscriptions, we find three different arrangements: the texts may both be incised or in relief, or the Indic text may be incised and the Persian/Arabic text in relief.

In the following, the inscriptions will be placed into four different catego- ries. These categories are defined according to the size and prominence allotted to the languages on the slab. The categories thus do not reflect the length of each text, but its outward appearance. Since the characters used for one lan- guage might be smaller than those used for the other, texts of different sizes might have the same content, whereas in texts of the same size, one language might contain more information. Some of the cases are difficult to decide, either because one of the texts has only been partially preserved, or since no photo of the Indic text has been published.

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31 Nos 3, 32, 62.

32 Nos 4, 7, 9, 22, 29, 40, 44, 46, 66.

33 Nos 5, 10, 12, 14, 18, 21, 26, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 39, 57, 60, 61, 63, 64, 70.

34 Nos 13, 67, 75.

35 Nos 15, 20, 31, 37, 38, 41, 43, 45, 60, 68, 69.

36 Nos 24, 58, 64, 73.

37 Nos 32, 35.

38 Nos 2, 42.

39 Nos 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55.

40 Nos 6, 8, 36, 56, 74, 76.

41 Nos 25, 33.

42 Nos 1, 17, 19, 23, 28, 34, 54, 59, 65, 71.

Indic text marginalized

In several inscriptions, the Persian/Arabic text is entirely dominant, while the Indic text is very small and in some cases almost invisible in the margins of the slab. The Indic text is in most cases in Nāgarī, and the language is Sanskrit or Hindi, but sometimes unspecified. Often, the Indic text is almost invisible in the published image and no translation is provided; this is the case for eight inscriptions.[43] In two cases (nos 31, 45), the Indic text is not mentioned in the edi- tion at all. For no. 31, it is possible that the Persian text was inscribed on a *spolium* from an earlier building, and that the Indic text was not related to the Persian.

In this category of bilingual inscriptions, the Persian text is always promi- nently in the centre, and in most cases in relief. Inscriptions nos 37, 38 and 39 are all related to a certain Aflāṭūn Khān, who was the local governor for Mur- taḍā Niẓām Shāh I (r. 1565–1588 CE) of Ahmadnagar. The Indic version is very short, and in all three cases very damaged. It contains the construction date. In one case, Arabic numerals are spelled out in Nāgarī script (no. 38). Inscriptions nos 67, 69 and 70 were produced in the period of Aurangzēb, but differ in their arrangement of the two texts: in the first case, the Indic text is below the Per- sian; in the second, above it; and in the third, in the right and left margins. All three inscriptions deal with construction works in the realm of a *rāja* or *mahārāja*; the Indic versions contain the names of the persons involved.

We may wonder who the addressees of the Indic part of the inscriptions were. It was certainly only possible to read them from up close, while from a distance, one might not even have seen them. In the case of constructions from the period of Aurangzēb, it is reasonable to assume that the Indic texts were added because the construction works were carried out in the territory of a *rāja* or *mahārāja*. It remains unclear, however, why even in such an environment, the Indic versions were entirely marginalized.

Indic text in smaller size

In many inscriptions, the Indic text, in most cases in Nāgarī script, is smaller in size than the Persian/Arabic text. The letters are smaller, and – with the excep- tion of one inscription (no. 76) – the Indic text is below the Persian/Arabic. There is thus a clear hierarchy between the two texts, with the Persian/Arabic in the dominant position.[44] All three types – with both the Persian and Indic text incised,[45] the Persian in relief and the Indic text incised,[46] and both texts in re- lief[47] – feature this arrangement.

43 Nos 31, 37, 38, 39, 45, 67, 69, 70.

The comparison of the two versions is not easy, since in many cases, the In- dic version is too weathered to be properly deciphered, and the Persian/Arabic version is also often damaged. The inscriptions are from many different areas and periods. But two general tendencies can be observed: first, in many cases in which the Indic version is shorter, it focuses on the essential information, like the name of the builder, the governor and the ruler and the purpose of the in- scription. The *basmala*,[48] eulogies and blessing formulas, as well as threats, have often been deleted; this implies that specifically Islamic elements have been omitted, and only in a few cases replaced by Hindu phrases. Second, in spite of the reduction of space, many Indic inscriptions contain more chronolog- ical information.

Indic and Persian/Arabic texts of the same size

The second largest group of bilingual inscriptions has Indic and Persian texts of the same size.[49] There are four subcategories in this group: the first and predom- inant group consists of inscriptions in which the Persian/Arabic and Sanskrit text are on the same slab and placed one below the other.[50] In these cases, the Persian/Arabic inscription is always on top and thus optically prioritized. This is not the case for the other three types, in which no priority can be established. In the second type, the texts are placed next to each other, on the right and left sides of the same slab.[51] Here, the Indic text is on the left side. This arrangement is probably related to the different writing directions, because Persian/Arabic is written from right to left, and the Indic scripts from left to right. The third type consists of texts that have been placed on both sides of the same slab. Only one inscription of this type is found in the corpus (no. 5). In the fourth category, the two texts are on different slabs.[52] In these cases, it is often not easy to under- stand the intended relative position of the two inscriptions to each other, since many of these inscriptions have not been found in their original context. There are too many different relations between the two versions of the text to summa- rize them here; for some examples, details of the relationship between the two versions of the text are given below.

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44 Nos 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 15, 17, 19, 21, 22, 28, 34, 35, 42, 43, 47, 58, (65), 66, 71, 76.

45 Nos 3, 8, 15, 66, 71, 76.

46 Nos 6, 9, 10, 17, 19, 21, 22, 28, 34, 54, 58.

47 Nos 42, 43.

48 The phrase ‘In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful’ is called the *basmala*.

49 Nos 2, 4, 5, 7, 11, 13, 23, 27, 29, 30, 32, 41, 44, 56, 59, 61, (64), 68, 72, 73.

Indic text larger than Persian/Arabic text

There is also a certain number of inscriptions in which the Indic text is longer and more prominent.[53] The order of the texts varies; in most cases, the Persian/Arabic text is on the top;[54] in others, it is on a different slab.[55] In one in- scription, the two languages are on different sides of a copper plate (no. 74). There is one single inscription in which the Persian is below the Indic text (no. 62), and because of the layout of the two texts, it deserves special attention. It will be described in detail below (Subsection 6.9).

Here again, the relationship between the texts in different languages varies, and no general rule can be established. Some examples will therefore also be discussed.

Tri- and multilingual inscriptions

Altogether five examples of inscriptions with more than two languages are in- cluded in the corpus. The first is the Tarisāppaḷḷi copper plates, the oldest inscription included in the corpus (no. 1). On these plates, the main language is Tamil, while the other languages – Hebrew, Arabic and Pahlavi – have only been used for signatures. The majority of the space is therefore occupied by Tamil, which was the language of the Chera Parumals, the ruling dynasty of Kerala at that time (r. 844–1124 CE).

The second inscription is from Sri Lanka and is in Tamil, Persian and Chinese (no. 16). The Tamil version is on the top left, the Persian on the bot- tom left, and the Chinese fills the entire right side. The size of all three texts is almost the same, with none dominating the slab. This slab was not pro- duced locally, but in Nanjing, and was transported to Sri Lanka to be placed in a temple. Due to its location in Sri Lanka, this inscription is exceptional in many regards.

The trilingual inscription in Persian, Marathi and Kannada (no. 60) from Karnataka belongs to the ʿĀdil Shāhī dynasty. The size of the three versions is more or less the same, with Persian first, then Marathi, and Kannada last. The Marathi and Kannada versions additionally report the construction of a well for the god Śambhu, while the Persian version has more praise formulas. In the trilingual inscription in Persian, Old Gujarati and Sanskrit, the Persian version is dominant.[56]

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50 Nos 2, 11, 13, 23, 27, 29, 32, 41, 44, 59.

51 Nos 30, 61, 64.

52 Nos 4, 26, 56, 68, 72, 73.

53 Nos 18, 24, 25, 33, 46, 57, 62, 63, 74.

54 Nos 18, 25, 33, 46, 63.

55 Nos 24, 57.

Direction stones

In a category of their own are the direction stones, or signs indicating the way to specific places.[57] Almost all of these were erected around the year 1000 AH / 1591–1592 CE by Burhān Niẓām Shāh II (r. 1591–1595 CE), and one by Burhān Niẓām Shāh III (r. 1609–1631 CE). On these direction stones, the majority of the words written in Nāgarī are Persian or Arabic, like *jamān* for *zamān* (Persian), 'time'; *syā* for *shāh* (Persian), 'king'; and *aḷapha* for *alf* (Arabic), 'thousand'. They are thus rather biscriptal than bilingual, with Persian and Arabic written in two different alphabets. However, in between the Persian words, we also find some terms in Marathi.[58] We may wonder who was supposed to read these direction stones, and why they were produced in this way. In the case of Latin inscriptions written in Greek, Martti Leiwo has suggested that the Greek char- acters were used because the stonecutter did not know the Latin characters, and because the person who set up the inscription did not know the difference between Latin and Greek.[59] This explanation cannot be transferred to the Ma- rathi–Persian case, since the direction stones have Persian characters in addi- tion to the Nāgarī ones. The reason for writing Persian in Nāgarī must there- fore have been related to the addressees. According to Soroni, there also exist letters and *farmāns* with Persian written in Moṛi script, meant to be read aloud.[60] We must therefore assume that there were people who were able to read Nāgarī or Moṛi, but not Persian, and who knew Persian only orally. Be- sides the direction stones, two further inscriptions are known in which Nāgarī script is used to write Persian or Arabic: a grant for the village of Shirol (now Jaisinghpur, Maharashtra), which, besides an inscription with Persian in Ara- bic and Nāgarī characters, also has an inscription in Kannada, and an inscrip- tion from Galna fort (Nasik district, Maharashtra), in which the Arabic year is written in Nāgarī.[61]

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56 No. 12; see Sheikh 2014, 202.

57 Nos 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55.

Examples of bilingual inscriptions

The number of bilingual inscriptions in the corpus is too high to discuss them all. In the following, only some examples of bilingual inscriptions are therefore examined. The selection was guided by the wish to choose inscriptions that are

distinguished by particular differences between the two versions, or that stand out due to certain historical or stylistic features.[62]

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58 See Sohoni 2022, 1–2, who also gives a good transcription and transliteration of one of these direction stones.

59 Leiwo 2002, 178.

60 Soroni 2022, 6.

61 Nos 36 and 38.

62 The translations of the Indic texts are taken from the editions, with some corrections of the English. The translations of Arabic and Persian usually also follow the editions, but are occa- sionally modified according to the present author's understanding or – in cases of passages from the Quran – according to contemporary standard translations.

A Persian and Marathi inscription from the Niẓām Shāhī period (no. 56)

Persian version:

در عهد شاه عادل کامل نظام شاه، بساط خان که هست از جان
چاکری، از این باغ زمین انعام بدل چراغ مسجد [و] گنبد داد
است – هر که منع کند ، بر زن او خر

Translation of the Persian:

In the reign of the just and perfect king Niẓām Shāh, Bisāṭ Khān, who is (His Majesty's) most loyal servant, has endowed land from this garden as *inʿām* for the lights of the mosque and the dome. Whoever contravenes, may a donkey be on his wife!

Transliteration of the Marathi:[63]

nījāma syā kā kadīma … vīsāta — b(v?)āgaṁ jamīna īnāma vadala dīvā vattī. masīdu va gubhata dīdhalā śrāhe jo koyahī manā karola

————māṃ para gacchava

Translation of the Marathi:

Niẓām Shāh's old (?) … Bisāṭ … has given the garden land in *inʿām* for lighting the mosque and the dome. Whosoever forbids … donkey.

The two versions of the inscription are remarkably close to each other. Accord- ing to Pushkar Sohoni's categorization scheme,[64] the same text is rendered in the two languages. Even with some of the Marathi part missing, the purpose of the grant is evidently the same: in both cases, the endowed object is the garden; the name of the ruler and the donor are similar. The only difference seems to be at the beginning, where the Persian text refers to the

reign of Niẓām Shāh. The Persian term *inʿām* (‘grant, endowment’) has been kept in the Marathi version, probably because the composer wanted to keep this culturally specific term with all its juridical implications. From the Persian side, the typical western Indian curse ‘may a donkey be on his wife’ has been adopted.[65] Based on the textual evidence, it is impossible to decide which inscription was composed first, and which is a translation. Placed on two separate slabs, none of them is

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63 Transliteration by Lingli Li.

64 Sohoni 2022, 8. This scheme is a modification of the one proposed in Leiwo 2002, 173–174.

65 This inscription is also discussed in Sohoni 2022, 9.

optically dominant. Since the content is about a typical Islamic grant, I assume however that the Marathi is a translation of the Persian version.

Inscription from Junagarh, Khaljī period (1290–1329 CE) (no. 22)

Persian version:

(1) بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم بنا کرد این مینار ملک سید محمد مبارک عز سلطانپوری(2) در عهد سلطان قطب الدین بن محمد شاه السلطان بتاریخ یازدهم ماه ربیع الاول (3) ...هر که... بانی را دعا ایمان یاد کر[د]

Translation of the Persian:

(1) In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful. This *mīnār* (tower, minaret) was built by Malik Sayyid Muḥammad Mubārak ʿAzz of Sulṭānpūr,

(2) during the reign of *Sulṭān* Quṭb ud-Dīn son of Muḥammad Shāh, the *sulṭān*, on the 11th of Rabīʿ I.[66]

(3) …Whoever … offers a prayer for (the soundness of) the faith of the builder.

Transliteration of the Sanskrit:

(1) saṁvat 1514 barṣe

(2) śrāvaṇa-badi [2 rtha ravau] sulatāna-śrī-kutabadina-viji-rāje śrī devapatana-

(3) taḥ sulatāna-[pahī] malika-śrīḥ mubāra[ka-su]ta-malika-śrī-mahaṁmada-suta-malika- śrī-[makada ...].

(4) ji … ipati vajepa … ā … na ha punya-tī a ...ī ... ṣa ... na…i ... bīrāsila

(5) ... ī … lā sūtra[dha]ra ... sūya...i ... tta ... su ... la ... tī saṁvat

(6) [15]14 ba[r]ṣa ...

Translation of the Sanskrit:

In the (Vikrama) year 1514, on Sunday, the second day of the dark fortnight of (the month of) Śrāvaṇa,[67] during the victorious reign of the illustrious Sulatāna, Kutabadīna (*Sulṭān* Quṭb ud-Dīn), from the glorious (city of) Devapatana, the illustrious Malika

(Malik) [Makada …], son of the illustrious Malika Mahaṁmada, son of the illustrious Malika Mu- bāraka, … Sulatāna …Pious [holy place] … the mason … the year [15]14…

Quṭb Shāhī inscription from the Nalgonda district, Telangana (no. 33)

Translation of the Persian:

ابو المظفر سلطان
در تاریخ چهاردهم شهر رمضان المبارک سنه
۹۵۸ حضرت پناهی نقابت دستگاهی سید شاه
میر بن المرحوم سید احمد طباطبائی اصفهانی
کالوه حوض پانگل که بعد از سالها خراب شده بود از
جهة تواب زر خرج کرد و معمور ساخت
و کسی که کالوهٔ مذکوررا مشقت کرد و اهتمام نمود رحمت
الله بن عبد الکریم خوانشاهی (؟) و از ابتدای کتوه... اند و...
تا حد ندی کرشنا از کالوه و حوض... ...در قصبهٔ پانگل
چکیده گشت
و در تحت حوض حصه (؟) مسلمان و... ...باد
سنه ۹۵۸

[In the reign of] Quṭb Shāh Abū l-Muẓaffar Sulṭān [Ibrāhīm]. On the 14th of the blessed month of Ramaḍān 958 [15 September 1551 CE], His Honour [lit. 'His Refuge'], the wielder of authority, Sayyid Shāh Mīr, son of the late Sayyid Aḥmad Ṭabāṭabāʾī Iṣfahānī', rebuilt the embankment of the Pangal tank, which had fallen out of repair through age, and spent money [on this work] to obtain [God's] forgiveness. The person who worked hard and su- pervised [the repairs] was Raḥmat Ullāh, son of ʿAbd ul-Karīm Khwān Shāhī [?]. The em- bankment was breached from … to the boundary of the river Krishna, and waters flowed from the tank through the breach (of the dyke) to the town of Pangal … The share of the Muslims from [the lands of] the tank … remain …! 985 AH.

66 The third month of the Islamic lunar year.

67 The fifth lunar month of the Hindu calendar.

Even with the incomplete reading of the Sanskrit, the differences between the Persian and Sanskrit versions are obvious. The Sanskrit begins and ends with the date, which appears in the Persian version only once, towards the end, be- fore the call to pray for the builder. This is missing in the Sanskrit version. The names and the genealogical information differ slightly, and Sulṭānpūr is called by its old name Devapatana. Due to the lacunae, we do not know which word was used for the minaret. The Sanskrit version contains more adjectives, like 'victorious' and 'illustrious'. Although the two texts convey the same message, they are therefore quite different. The inscription belongs to Sohoni's Category 3 (two different texts of nearly the same content). The size and placement of the Persian text give it a dominant position, but the Sanskrit text is not a translation of the Persian.

Transliteration of the Telugu:

(1) śrī [II*] svasti śrī jayâbhyudaya śālivāha

(2) na-śaka-varuṣaṁbulu 1432 yagunāṭi pramō

(3) da-saṁvvatsara-māgha-śu.15 Bhaumavāraṁ | Śrīma

(4) n-mahāmaṁḍḍalēśvara Yiburāhim Kutubu

(5) Śa rājyamu śeyaṁgānu vāri maṁnnana-sabhi

(6) kuṁḍu Sayidu Sādātu Sayidu Śahā-Mī-

(7) ruku puṇyamugānu āyana nija-hitu

(8) ḍu vivēka-bhūṣaṇuḍu maṁnnana-tējō

(9) nidhi ayinaṭhavaṁṭi Rāmattullāgāru Pānu

(10) gaṁṭṭi Vudaya-samudraṁ-kāluva Yiṁddu

(11) pukela-sīmalō Namile-vadda Musi-yēṭi kattuva khi

(12) lamai vuṁḍḍaṁgānu punar-ōddharakamugānu

(13) kattuva gaṭṭi kāluva śēyiṁcci ā nīḷḷu U

(14) dayasamudramu niṁcci āügi nīḷḷu Kr

(15) ṣṇa-gāmini śēyiṁci Namile-kattuva moda

(16) lu koni Krṣṇa yīmadhya cheruvulu kuṁṭalu

(17) kāluvalu niṁcci yiṁdula pāla-paḍḍa dhānyānaku da

(18) śabaṁddamu Pānugaṁṭṭi kindda naḍachēnu ā-chamdr-ā

(19) rka-sthāyigā | Yī Vudayasamudraṁ ve

(20) nuka pāḷḷa vivaramu, rājuku pālu

(21) 1 prajaku palumnn-ara 11/2-ṁ Turukala-

(22) ku Brāṁhmalaku pāḷḷu reṁḍḍu 2 yī.

(23) choppana ā-chamdr-ārkka-sthāyigā i-

(24) stimi || Yī dharmaṁ pratipāliṁcinavāri-

(25) ki yaṁttō puṇyaṁ | sva-dattādvi-guṇaṁ pu-

(26) ṇya[ṁ] para-datt-anupālanaṁ | para-datt-āpa-

(27) hārēṇa | sva-dattaṁ niṣphalaṁ bhavēttu || Śrī [||*]

(28) naṣṭaṁ kulaṁ bhinna-taṭāka-kūpaṁ | babhra-para-

(29) rājyaṁ śaraṇâgataṁ cca | gāṁ Brāhmaṇāṁ dē

(30) va-gṛihâlayaṁ cca yō[d*]dharē[t*] pūrva-catur-guṇa[h*].

(31) syat || Maṁgala mahā-śrī śrī śrī jēyu-

(32) nū || Śrī[||*]

Translation of the Telugu version:

Hail! On Tuesday, the 15th day of the bright half of Māgha in the Jovian year Pramoda, the year of the Śālivāhana Śaka era being 1432, while Mahāmaṇḍalēśvara Yiburahiṁ Kutubu Śa (Ibrāhīm Quṭb Shāh) was ruling. Ramattulla (Raḥmat Ullāh), who was kind to his own, had prudence as his ornament and who was like a revered treasure of splendour, saw that the channel from the Udayasamudram (tank) in Pānugallu and the dam of the river Musi near Namile in the Yindupukela-area had been dilapidated. For the sake of their reconstruction he fixed the dam and had a channel made and filled the Udayasamudram (tank) with its waters. He then made the water flow into the Krṣṇā river and filled the tanks, ponds and canals between the Namile dam and the Krṣṇā river. (It was also ordered) that there be a *daśabandham* on the shared crops there (around the tanks, ponds canals, etc.) below Pānugallu as long as the sun and the moon last. (These acts of charity) were done for the merit of Sayidu Sādātu Sayidu Śāhā-Mīru (Sayyid us-Sādāt, Sayyid Shāh Mīr), who was an honoured councillor (of the king). The shares (of income) from [the lands irrigated] by the Udayasamudram (tank) are explained:

> We (i.e. Raḥmat Ullāh) have given, at the following rates, one share to the king, one share and a half to the subjects, and two shares to the Turukas (i.e. Muslims) as well as to the Brahmans for so long as the sun and the moon endure. Those who protect this charitable act (*dharmamu*) will acquire immeasurable merit. Maintaining the gift of another is twice as meritorious as one's own gift. By stealing another's gift, one's own gift

becomes fruitless.[68]

> He who should support a family ruined after their ponds and wells have burst, and a kingdom that has sought protection, and a cow and a Brahman on the grounds of a tem- ple, will have four times [as much merit] as before [??].

Here, the differences between the two versions are even more remarkable. First of all, the Telugu version is longer. Although the Persian is at the top of the slab, the Telugu occupies the majority of the space and is more prominent. The sun and moon engraved on the top of the stone further enhance the dominance of the non- Persian elements. This dominance is also reflected in the content of the text. Both versions deal with the same event, namely the rebuilding of the Pangal tank and the building of a channel. The exact shares and the taxation of the crops (*daśabandham* tenure) are recorded in greater detail in the Telugu. The Telugu version mentions that the charity was done for the merit of Sayyid Shāh Mīr, prom- ises merits for those who protect the endowment, and praises the virtue of giving. In the Persian version, the purpose of the endowment consists in obtaining God's forgiveness and thus in securing recompense for the next life – a typical Islamic concept. What is perhaps most remarkable is the difference in prominence be- tween the person who financed the building activities and the one who supervised the work. In Telugu, the supervisor is not only mentioned earlier, but also praised more greatly. Was he involved in the wording of the Telugu inscription, or did he himself perhaps understand Telugu? Was he a locally prominent person whose merit was more meaningful to the Telugu-speaking community?

In conclusion, we also have to consider the relation between the two texts: is the Persian version a summarized translation of the Telugu, corresponding to So- honi's Category 4? Or are these rather two texts that have been prepared on the

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68 Language of this verse and the next is Sanskrit, not Telugu.

same topic in 'dynamic equivalence'?[69] Given the difference of emphasis between the builder and the donor in this inscription, what David G. K. Taylor has described for Aramaic and Greek inscriptions from Palmyra seems to be quite fitting here:

> There are numerous examples of bilingual inscriptions where the two texts are not dra- matically different, and yet it is clear that each is an independent product conforming to accepted conventions.[70]

Inscription from Bidar about the construction of a step well (no. 18)

The following inscription from Bidar is also longer in its Indic version. Again, the Persian text is at the top, but the Sanskrit text is much longer, taking

almost two-thirds of the slab.

Persian version:

(1) بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم خیر حافظا و هو ارحم الراحمین یا غفور

(2) ذکر بناء ؟ تاریخ چهاردهم ماه جمادالاخر سنه ؟ ثمان و اربعین و ثمانمایة مخدومه جهان(3) بیبی شاهناز والدهٔ خان معظم خلف ؟ اعظم محمود خان

(4) شد بنا این بائین از عون خدای کن فکان بود سال از هجرت پیغامبر آخر زمان

(5) چهل و هشت و هیصد =(هشتصد) و عهد شده شه عادل کی بودال بهمن شاه و دارا شاه احمد ذو الامان

(6) مادر محمود خان مهوری؟... شاه ...

(7) عورت صاحب سعادت پاک دامن بود تا دست داد این خیر جاری هر که بخورد آب آن(8) در دعاء عاقبت خیر این سه تن در هر دمی بر کشاید =(گشاید) از میان جان بصدق دل زبان

Translation of the Persian:

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful. ‘Allāh is the best preserver, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy.’[71] O Forgiver!

Account of the construction, on the 14th of the month of Jumādā II (of the) year eight and forty and eight hundred, (by) Makhdūma-yi Jahān Bībī Shahnāz, mother of the magnifi- cent *khān* and great royal scion Maḥmūd Khān.

This step well was constructed with help from the lord of the universe the year [counting] from the Hijra of the last of the prophets

was forty-and-eight and eight hundred, and (it was under) the reign of the just king,

who is directly descended from Bahman Shāh and Dāra Shāh, namely Aḥmad (Shāh), the protector.

(The builder is) the mother of Maḥmūd Khān of Mahūr (?) … king …

She was a fortunate woman, and chaste; hence,

such a flowing bounty came into existence (through her). May whosoever drinks water therefrom

in prayer for the happy ending of these three personages with every breath loosen his tongue

from the grid of soul with sincerity of heart.

Transliteration of the Sanskrit:[72]

(1) 1 śriḥ | ajāya jagad-utpatti-sthiti-saṁhāra-kāriṇe | triguṇā[ya] guṇâtīta-mūrtaye brah- mane na

(2) maḥ || [1*] tad-ājñayâjāyata bhūtale smin bhūri-pratāpâ[na]la-tāpi[tâ]riḥ | ahaṁmado drpta-nareṁdra-pakṣi-śye-

(3) no mahān bahmani-pātiśāhaḥ || [2*] maheṁdrasya kuberasya nagarī na garīyasī | apekṣā bedaraṁ yasya na-

(4) garaṁ nagaraṁ[jitam] || [3*] muktāmayaṁ pravālâ[ḍhyaṁ] puraṁ śra-bhavanaṁ hi yat | ucchair aṁbhodhivad bhā[ti] citraṁ nānaka-

(5) bhūdharaṁ || [4*] vāditrair badhirāyate tribhuvanaṁ [dhūlī]bhir aṁdhāyate yasmin rāṁjy abhiṣeṇayaty atibharād bhū

(6) miś ca na[mrā]yate yad-durgâdhikrtā malīkaᴗcanāḥ khānāḥ puraḥ koṭayaḥ kas ta- syâhmada-bahma

(7) nī-narapateḥ saṁkhyātum iṣte camūṁ || [5*] [jīva]d-rāja-maheṁdra-durga-nrpa[tiṁ] yasy[âgra]-senāpatiḥ kārāmaṁ-

(8) dira-gaṁ [karoti] ᴗᴗ— śrī-devarājaṁ nrpaṁ | vikrāṁtaṁ karadīkaroti sacivo yaś caika- kaḥ sarvadā

(9) kas tasyâhmada-bahmanī-narapateḥ saṁkhyātum īśo guṇān || [6*] tasyâsty abhimatâbhū

(10) pa-vanitā paryupāsitā | bībī śrī-sahanājh-ākhyā hrepayantī ratiṁ śriyā || [7*] kiṁ

(11) śīta-dyuti-maṁḍalād abhipatatkuṁdôjvalā kaumudī smerâṁbhoruhataḥ prabhūta- madhuno

(12) niṣyanda-dhārā kim u | kiṁ vā caṁdramaṇeḥ sravan-nava-sudhā-ve[lā] manohāriṇī kiṁ vā ratna-sa

(13) mūhato bahir asau sphārībhavaddīdhitiḥ || [8*] saubhāgya-suṁdara-satītva-kalā- vilāsa-cātu

(14) rya-drāna-kuśalatva-suśīlatā[dyā] | yasyāṁ sadā saha-bhuvaḥ prathitā guṇâughā ratnāni

(15) rohaṇa-prthu-dyutimanti santi || [9*] mahamūda-khāna-nā[mā tanayo] māṁ.. [pu]raṁ yasyāḥ | pāla

(16) yati smâvani-pati-kirīṭa-koṭi-pramṛṣṭâṁghriḥ || [10*] sā câhmada-sulutrāṇa-tanaye naya-śā-

||

72 Metres: verses 1, 3–4, 7, 11–13 *Anuṣṭubh*; verse 2 *Upajāti*; verses 5–6, 8 *Śārdūlavikrīḍita*;

verse 9 *Vasantatilaka*; verses 10, 15 *Upagīti*; verse 14 *Āryā*.

(17) lini | allābadī-pātiśāhe śāsaty ūrvīṁ mahodaye || [11*] tasmin puravare 'gaṇya-tuṁga- maṁdi-

(18) ra-maṁḍite | vāpīm akārayad ramyāṁ bhūri-sopāna-saṁpadāṁ || [12*] niṁdaty upavanaṁ ramyaṁ yasyā ... va-

(19) naṁ vanaṁ(nam) | manute câpi pānīyaṁ taṁ payaḥsāgaraṁ garaṁ(ram) | | [13*] idaṁ ca | tarka-rasânala-caṁdraiḥ 1366 śā

(20) ke raktākṣi-vatsarâśvayuji | māse śukla-daśamyāṁ some śravaṇe dhruve yoge || [14*]… n=āhmada-ba-

(21) hmanī-bībī-[sa]hanājhayā vihitā | ā-caṁdrârkaṁ ... s ānaṁdinī jagataḥ || [15*] śrīḥ ||

Translation of the Sanskrit:

[Verse 1] Bow to Brahmā, who is the cause of the creation, sustenance and destruction of the Universe, who is full of all the three qualities and transcends all the three qualities. [Verse 2] As ordained by him [Brahmā], the great Bahmani king Ahaṃmada [Aḥmad] was born on earth, a proud king like a hawk, his enemies scorched by the fire of his majesty. [Verse 3] Not greater is the capital city of lord Kubera, who looks to the city of Bedara [Bidar] delighted by mountains [?].

[Verse 4] His city is laden with pearls and rich in coral. The lofty splendid palace appears like the sea; [the city] in which a wondrous drum like a mountain

[Verse 5] (accompanied by) instruments deafens the three worlds; when the king is on the march they [the three worlds] are blinded by the dust; and because of the extreme burden the earth bowed down. Crores of kings, Khans were put in charge of his forts/citadels. Who is able to calculate [the size of] the army of Ahmada Bahmanī.

[Verse 6] His chief general makes the living ruler of the fort at Rājamahendra a prisoner; and his minister, all by himself, makes the powerful King Devarāja pay tribute in perpetui- ty. Who can count the virtues of King Ahamada Bahmanī?

[Verse 7] He has a beloved queen, much revered, named Sahanājh who puts to shame Rati with her splendour.

[Verse 8] Is she moonlight, shining like a white water lilly descending from the orb of the moon or a torrent of juice from a fully-opened lotus abounding in nectar, or a charming stream of fresh nectar flowing from a moon stone? That [queen]'s external brilliance grows brighter from the abundance of gems [that she wears].

[Verse 9] She was beautiful by good fortune, in possession of chastity, skill in the arts and flirtatious grace, possessed a penchant for generosity, and refined habits. In her abide in- nate multitudes of virtues, far-famed, always abide, jewels with the abundant lustre of Mt Rohaṇa.

[Verse 10] Her son named Mahmūd Khān protected the city of Māṃ[.], his feet rubbed by the tips of the crowns of kings.

[Verse 11] And she, while the prosperous Allābadī Pātishah, son of Āhmad Sultān, gov- erned the earth with good policy,

[Verse 12] had made a lovely tank/reservoir with plenty of excellent stairs in that best of cities which innumerable lofty mansions adorned.

[Verse 13] Its lovely grove condemns the forest [of the gods?] as a normal forest [?] and its drinking water considers the milk-ocean to be poison.

[Verse 14] And this [reservoir] was constructed on the 10th day of the bright fortnight in the month Āśvina[73] of the Jovian Year Raktākṣi[74] in 1366 of the Śālivahana Śaka, a Monday in the *nakṣatra* Śravaṇa, in the yoga (half-*nakṣatra*) of Dhruva (the polar star). It will last as long as the sun and the moon are there, [Verse 15] by Ahmad Bahmanī Bībī Sahanājh … as long as the sun and moon … delighting for the world …

The Persian version mainly mentions Bībī Shahnāz,

the mother of Maḥmūd Khān, as the builder of the step well, records its construction date, and links the genealogy of the Bahmanids (r. 1347–1527) with the legendary hero Bahmān and his son Dārā. It begins with the *basmala* and a quotation from the Quran, and ends with the wish that those who drink from the well will pray for the builder Bībī Shahnāz, Maḥmūd and Aḥmad.

The Sanskrit inscription is much more detailed. After referring to Brahma, the creator god of Hinduism, the current ruler, ʿAlā ud-Dīn Aḥmad Shāh (r. 1436–1458 CE), is praised at length. It then provides some historical infor- mation and mentions Aḥmad's victory over Deva Rāi of Vijayanagara. Related to these events, the inscription refers to a conflict within the royal family. It is too enigmatic, however, to fully understand the conflict without prior knowledge of the participants and events. What makes this inscription interesting is the fact that it conveys a very different message in the two languages. While in the Per- sian version, the building of the step well is no more than a charitable act, it has a political dimension in Sanskrit. The victory over Deva Rāi, the averted danger and the representation of the king as ordained by god and as so powerful that nothing against his interest can happen – all this is mentioned only in the San- skrit and thus conveyed only to those able to read this language. Was it meant as a warning to those who had been involved in the intrigue and the supporters of Deva Rāi – that is, to insiders who knew the context?

Besides the information on the political intrigue, it is worth considering the adaptations of the religious phrases, like the invocation of Brahma and the references to the gods Indra and Kubera, which appear only in the Sanskrit text. Such changes are quite frequent, and in particular, the invocation of Hindu goddesses is found in several Indic versions of inscriptions.[75] Similarly, refer- ences to the king as a conqueror of infidels and shelter of Islam[76] are often omit-

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73 The seventh lunar month of the Hindu calendar.

74 The fifty-eighth year of the Jupiter cycle of sixty years.

75 Nos 10, 24, 32, 60, 61.

76 Nos 4, 75.

ted from the Indic version, just as references to libations are from the Per- sian/Arabic text.[77] We can again see here an adaptation to accepted conventions.

Inscription from Gujarat about a religious endowment

Another interesting adaptation is related to curses and blessings, as already seen in some of the inscriptions discussed so far. These usually pertain to ad- herence to regulations and rules. Curses and

blessings are used in all the lan- guages considered here, often not translated verbatim, but rather adjusted to the cultural context. One good example comes from Gujarat; the inscription provides information on a religious endowment (*waqf*).[78]

Persian version:

(1) در تاریخ روز سه شنبه غره
محرم سنه اربع و سبعمائه(2) از
صدقات بادشاه =(پادشاه) عادل
رای کرندیو زید ملکه(3) و ملک
الاکابر بلچق (و) ملک الامرا
شادی عز نصرهم(4) وقف کرد
برای مسجد جامع کنبایة تاج
الدین
(5) حسن بن وزیر الوزرا نجم
الدنیا والدین محمود خطیب[ب]
(6) ده سانبا =(سانپا) در زمین
کنم با جمله حدود...
(7) و در جنان (جهات؟) انچه در
تعلق این دهست از حاصل و...(8)
... مه؟ باید مسلمانان
(9) ... کنند تا همه در
(10) ... یا؟ تعرض و حکم کند و نقض
(11) این وقف وصیت ؟.....دهد گر بگرداند در لعنت (12)
خدا و رسول باشد و لعنة اللاعنین و الملائکة اجمعین

Translation of the Persian version:

(1) On the day of Tuesday, the first of Muḥarram,[79] of the year four and seven hundred,

(2) from the estates dedicated to the pious use (*ṣadaqāt*) of the just king Rāi Karṇ Dev, may his kingdom increase,

(3) and Malik ul-Akābir Balchaq (and) Malik ul-ʿUmarā Shadī, may their victory be glorified, (4–5) Tāj ud-Dīn Ḥasan, son of Wazīr ul-Wuzarā Najm ud-Dunyā wa d-Dīn, made in laud- able words an endowment for the Friday mosque of Kambāya,

(6) in the village of Sāmbā, in the land of Kānam, with all its boundaries

(7) and whatever in the vicinities is related to this village and the income and …

(8) … the Muslims should …

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77 Nos 4, 30.

78 No. 6. See also Sheikh 2014, 191–192.

79 First month of the Islamic year.

(9) … do so that they all, in

(10) … should object to or pass any judgement against it or seek to breach

(11) this endowment (and) attestation, or change it, will incur the curse

(12) of God and (His) Prophet and (also) the curse of the cursers and angels, all of them.

Transliteration of the Sanskrit:

(1) [śrī saṁ] vata 1360 varṣe bhādravā vadi

(2) [dvitīya-bhau] me Mahārājādhirāja śrī Ka-

(3) [rṇadeva]… Maliṣa śrī Baicaka Maliṣa śrī

(4) [Śādī]…… va śrī Hasaṇa prabhrtibhiḥ

(5) [Kāname Sāṃ] pâbhidhāna-grāmo ’yaṃ Staṃ

(6) [bhatīrthe jā] me misi kiyā dharmme

(7) ……[pra] dāttaḥ ‖ samastarāṇakaiḥ

(8) [ranu maṃtavya śva] pālanīyaḥ ॥ ठ ॥

Translation of the Sanskrit:

(1) In the auspicious year *saṁvat* 1360, in the dark half of Bhādrapada[80],

(2) [the second day, Tuesday] Mahārājādhirāja Ka

(3) [ṛna Deva Ma]lik Śrī Baḍchak, Malik Śrī

(4) [Shādī …] and Śrī Ḥasaṇa and the like,

(5–7) gave the village named Sāmpā in Kānam for religious purposes to the Stam(bhatīrtha Jā)miʿ mosque. All the Rānās should honour and

(8) execute it. That is all.

The Sanskrit version is not only smaller in dimension, but also shorter in length, and the extent of the *waqf* in particular is described much more briefly. Similar to our first example, the Sanskrit records the older name of the city, Stambhatīr- tha. Further, the Persian version contains several eulogies that are not included in the Sanskrit. The most interesting difference, however, relates to the protec- tion of the *waqf*. The Persian version threatens all those who do not respect the endowment with the curses of God, the Prophet and the angels. The Sanskrit is much more down to earth and addresses the local chiefs (*rānās*), asking them to honour and execute the endowment. It is likely that the Sanskrit version was meant especially for these local chiefs and was supposed to explain the provi- sions of the *waqf* to them in a language they could understand. We can consider the Sanskrit version a summarized translation corresponding to Sohoni's Cate- gory 4, but at the same time, we here see an effort to address those who were responsible on site.

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80 The sixth month of the Hindu calendar.

A bilingual inscription from Baroda

A similar local context can be seen in the bilingual inscription from the tomb of Bābā Arjun Shāh in Petlad, Baroda, who died in 633 AH / 1236 CE.[81] It is in Per- sian and Sanskrit, and is one of a total of three inscriptions from the tomb. Both the Persian and the Sanskrit versions are damaged. The Persian version is at the top and occupies much more space than the Sanskrit version, which is below it in smaller letters.

Persian version:

بسم الرحمن [الرحیم]

(1)...تاریخ ماه مبارک ذی الحجه سنه(2)..... باتمام رسید عمارت چاه از صدقات خا[یفه]

(3)..... السلاطین خدایگان عالم بادشاه(4)..... و الحاتم غیاث الدنیا و الدین غوث

الاسلا[م(5).....] کهف الثقلین ظل الله فی الخافقین ابو المظفر(6) مد الله عمره و خلد دولته در قصبه پیتلاودر جوار روضه شیخ المشایخ(7)..... نور الله قبره صاحب عمارت اضعف عباد الله حاجی اسمعیل عثمان شیرازی این عمارت وقف (؟)(8) کرد لوجه الله تعالی و بیست کبه زمین بجهت چاه

از مقطع قصبه پیتلاودرسید الامرا بدر الدین(9) ابو بکر امیر کوه .دارد مسلم است تا غریب و شهری را از این وضع راحتی رسد واجب است(10) بر امرا و ملوک و حاکمان که بعد از این آیند این خیررا قایم دارند و هیچ لغزشی (؟)(11) و بیست کنبه زمین که ذکر رفت مسلم دارند تا ثواب دو جهانی حاصل کرده باشند و [....شفا]عت(12) محمد علیه السلام گردد بالنبی و آله اجمعین

Translation of the Persian:

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

On the … [20th] of the auspicious month of Dhū l-Ḥijja[82] [723 AH], the construction of the well was completed. [It is one] of the charitable works (ordered) by the Caliph – … of kings, the lord of the world, the monarch … and Ḥātim, Ghiyath ud-Dunyā wa d-Dīn, the defender of Islam … the refuge of men and demons, the shadow of God in the east and west, Abū l-Muẓaffar … may God prolong his life and perpetuate his glory! – in the town of Petlawad, in the vicinity of the tomb of Shaikh ul-Mashāʾikh [Arjūn Shāh], may God illu- mine his grave. The builder, the humble servant of God Hājī Ismāʿīl ʿUthmān of Shiraz, dedicated this building to the cause of God, be He exalted. And 20 *kubhas* of land in the town of Petlawad, from the fief of Sayyid ul-Umarāʾ Badr ud-Dīn Abu Bakr, the chief of the mountain … are granted for the maintenance of the well: so that the stranger and the people of the town may gain relief through this charitable institution. It is incumbent upon the chiefs, kings and governors who succeed in the future to protect this gift and not fail … and (also) to preserve the grant of 20 *kubhas* of land mentioned above, so that they may secure rewards in both worlds and … intercession of Muḥammad, may peace be upon him!

… through the Prophet and all his descendants.

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81 No. 8. See also Sheikh 2014, 201–202.

82 The twelfth month of the Islamic calender.

Transliteration of the Sanskrit:

(1) oṁ saṁvat 1380 varṣe pauṣa-vadi 7 duliheja chaṁ 20

(2) [bh]omav adyeha yoginīpurâdhiṣṭhita-mahārājâdhirāja-

(3) śrīmat-suratrāṇa-śrī-gayāsadīna-vijiya-rājye tan-niyukt …

(4) ṇahillapattana-śri-dīvan-ādeśena peṭilāpadra-maṇḍala-karaṇi

(5) śrī-badara-dīna avubaka ahamad-amīra-koha-pratipattau petila…

(6) * ṣa-śrī-a(rjuna) ghori sannidhau skambha-tīrtha-vāstavyen=[el

(7) ... [i]la-ūshamāna-sīrājena jirṇa-uddhāra-kupa vahā(*)e

(8) ... k(e)na-āghāṭe kṣepita bhūmi kubha 20 viṁ [śati ka] ...

(9) ... sthale śrī-thakkurai [ḥ] pālanīyān i pārasī likhitaṁ

Translation of the Sanskrit:

Oṁ! In (Vikrama) *saṁvat* (year) 1380, on the 7th day of the dark (fortnight) of Pauṣa,[83] on the 20th (day) of the lunar month Duliheja (Dhū l-Ḥijja), on a Tuesday – on this day in the victorious reign of the glorious *sulṭān*, the illustrious Gayāsadīna (Ghiyath ud-Dīn), the paramount king of great kings, by the order of the Diwan at Aṇahilapaṭṭana … appointed by him (i.e. the *sulṭān*), under the dispensation of the glorious Badaradīna Avubaka Ahamada Amīru-koha (Badr ud-Dīn Abu Bakr Amīr-i Kūh), agent in the circle of Petilāpa- dra, in the proximity of the revered Arjuna-ghori, (at) Petila … 20 *kubhas* of land marked off with boundary were given by (Ismāila?) Ushmana Siraj (Ismāʿīl ʿUthmān Shirazī), an inhabitant of Skambhatīrtha … repaired well…. The illustrious *thakkura*s should protect (these gifts). Written in Persian.

The two inscriptions cannot be compared in full due to some illegible parts in the Sanskrit. They bear

many similarities, but also differ: all the religious phrases of the Persian text have been eliminated from the Sanskrit version, which instead begins with 'Oṁ'. At the end, the Persian version calls upon no- table figures, kings and rulers to preserve the land grant. In the Sanskrit ver- sion, this request is addressed to the *thakkura*s, a Sanskrit title for members of a landowning caste. One may wonder if the Sanskrit version of the inscription was addressing them: were the *thakkura*s supposed to read the text and obey it? It is the only inscription that ends in Sanskrit with a reference to the Persian text immediately above it. Perhaps the composer of the Sanskrit version did not know that the two versions would be placed on the same slab – or he wanted to indicate that the original text was in Persian, and that the Sanskrit is a transla- tion of it.

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83 The tenth month of the Hindu calendar.

The Veraval inscription of Chaulukya-Vaghela Arjuna

Many of the differences so far observed are also found in the famous bilin- gual inscription from Somanātha Pāṭan in Gujarat; it is in Sanskrit and Ara- bic and is about a Muslim shipowner and merchant, Nūr ud-Dīn Fīrūz from Hormuz, who acquired land next to the Somnath temple to build a mosque (no. 4). The lengthy text specifies the names of the people involved in the property transaction and the establishment of the *waqf* related to the build- ing of the mosque and its maintenance. Since this text has been edited and translated several times and also discussed in the literature,[84] I will focus here on the bilingual aspects of the document. Unfortunately, the original location of the inscription and the relative position of the Arabic and the Sanskrit text are unknown. Both inscriptions have been displaced: the San- skrit one is currently on a wall of the temple of Harshada Mātā in Verāval, next to Somnath, and the Arabic inscription is on the façade of the Qāḍī mosque in Somnath. The two texts were written on two separate stones, and we can only assume that they had originally been placed side by side or – somewhat less likely, due to access and readability – one atop the other.[85] Both scripts were engraved in black granite, with no ornamentation. There is no obvious hierarchical difference between the two inscriptions, but the date of the Sanskrit inscription is two months earlier (25 May 1264) than that of the Arabic inscription (23 July 1264), thus making it the primary one. Given that they are related to the building of a mosque, it is highly probable that the inscriptions were originally placed on a wall of said mosque. They obviously did not have a decorative function, but an informative character. We may assume that the addressees were those who had supported the construction of the mosque. Since the majority of the persons mentioned in the text were Hindus, one may wonder if the inscriptions were placed outside, perhaps on the façade – similar to

the current placement of the Arabic inscription in another mosque – or close to one of the doors.

The Arabic version is not a translation of the Sanskrit. The content of the two inscriptions overlaps, but there are also significant differences: in the Sanskrit version, the details of the *waqf* are enumerated, both its sources and intended use. The Sanskrit version furthermore contains four different dating systems, the first being the Hijrī year, referred to as year 662 of '*rasūla* Ma- hammada' (*rasūl* Muḥammad, i.e. the Prophet Muḥammad). This inscription also mentions that Fīrūz performed a libation with water, a ceremonial act rooted in Indian customs. The inscription generally shows a remarkable transfer of Islamic notions to the Hindu sphere, searching for equivalents within the other's religious concepts. The mosque is thus called a *dhar- masthāna*, and 'Śrī Viśvanātha' most probably denotes Allāh. Usually, this name is applied to Śiva, the god of the Somnath temple. The activities to which the *waqf* is dedicated are described with a combination of terms used in the context of temple rituals – like *pūjā* (reverence, worship) – and Arabic religious terms.[86] The Arabic inscription is much less detailed with regard to the *waqf*. Instead, we find long eulogies related to Fīrūz's father and Fīrūz himself. Furthermore, the inscription expresses the hope that Somnath might become a city of Islam, and that infidelity and idols might be banned from it. Since all other details of this bilingual inscription point to a friendly interaction between Hindus and Muslims, we may assume that this part of the Ara- bic inscription is rather formulaic and follows standard patterns.[87] Interestingly, the ruler addressed in the two inscriptions is also not the same: while the Sanskrit version refers to Arjunadeva, the Chaulukya-Vāghela king who ruled in Gujarat (r. 1261–1274 CE), the Arabic version instead mentions Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad, most probably the Delhi sultan Nāṣir ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Shāh (r. 1246–1265 CE).[88] These two versions of the inscription can again best be explained by the need to address the different expectations of the presumed readers, and to fulfil different needs. The eulogies for Fīrūz and his father, for example, might have been meant to raise his status in the eyes of his co-religionists, and fulfilled the conventions of this genre. On the other hand, the need to elaborate the details of the *waqf* and its use might be relat- ed to the fact that it was most likely temple property that was purchased for the endowment. The Hindu authorities thus may have wanted the details of this endowment to be disclosed and promulgated.

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84 Hultzsch 1882; Desai 1961, 10–15 and pl. II b; Sircar 1961–1962, 141–150; Chattopadhyaya 1998, 70–78, Thapar 2008, 88–99. The Arabic text is edited in Desai 1961, the Sanskrit text (in Nāgarī script) in Hultzsch 1882 and (in transliteration) Sircar 1961–1962. It is too long to repro- duce here.

85 The size of the Arabic inscription, which is not fully preserved, is 17″ × 25″ (43.18 × 63.5 cm); the size of the Sanskrit inscription is nowhere properly indicated.

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86 Chattopadhyaya 1998, 74–76.

87 Thapar 2008, 95.

88 The identification is not entirely clear. Nāṣir ud-Dīn Maḥmūd Shāh was a son or grandson of the Mamluk ruler Shams ud-Dīn Iltutmish (r. 1211–1236). It is not evident why he is called Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad here.

Two Arabic-Sanskrit inscriptions from Asīrgarh and Burhānpūr

The two inscriptions from the Friday mosques (*Jāmaʿ Masjid*) in Asīrgarh and Burhānpūr[89] in today's Madhya Pradesh resemble the inscription from Somnath insofar as they also translate central notions of Islam into a Sanskrit terminolo- gy that Hindus could understand. However, the design and location of these inscriptions are very different, causing us to wonder who the addressees were.

Both mosques were erected by the Fārūqī dynasty (r. 1382–1601 CE) and date from 992 AH / 1584 CE and 997 AH / 1589 CE, respectively. The inscriptions are in Arabic and Sanskrit and are placed inside the prayer hall on the *qibla* wall. The *qibla* wall is the wall towards which Muslims turn for the ritual prayer; it con- tains one or more prayer niches (*miḥrāb*) that indicate the direction of Mecca. It is thus the most important wall in a mosque. The inscription in Asīrgarh is placed in the northernmost *miḥrāb*, and the one in Burhānpūr in the southern- most *miḥrāb*. Although they are not placed over the central *miḥrāb*, their posi- tion is very prominent and quite unusual. All the inscriptions are in relief.

The Asīrgarh inscription consists of two lines in Arabic and three lines in Sanskrit. Although the text is longer in Sanskrit, the size of the two inscriptions is equal; this is achieved by using slightly smaller letters in Nāgarī. The Arabic dominates insofar as it is on the top, but the Nāgarī might have been easier to read since it was a little bit lower and in a very clear and easily readable script.

Arabic text:

(1) بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم ان المساجد فلا تدعوا مع الله احدا قال عليه السلام من بنى مسجدا لو كمفحص قطاة بنى الله له بيتا فى الجنة امر ببناء هذا المسجد المبارک الذى هو من حسنات الزمان و كالشامة على وجه الحسان سيدنا و مولانا السلطان ابن

(2) السلطان ابن السلطان عادلشاه بن مباركشاه بن عادلشاه الفاروقى العمرى العدوى خلد الله تعالى ملكه و سلطانه و افاض على العالمين بره و احسانه خالصا مخلصا لوجه الله الكريم و طلبا لمرضاته الجسيم تقبل الله منه صالح الاعمال بمحمد و صحبه و الآل و كان ابتداء بنايه (sic) فى ايام السلطنة الفاروقية العادلية فى يوم السبت رابع شهر شعبان فى سنة ٩٩٢ و اتمامه فى يوم

Translation of the Arabic text:

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful. 'And the places of worship are only for Allāh, so pray not unto anyone along with Allāh'.[90] And, says the Prophet, blessings of

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89 Nos 44 and 46.

90 Quran 72:18, tr. Pickthall 1930.

God be upon him, ‘whoever builds a mosque[;] be it small as the nest of the sandgrouse,[91] God will build him a house in Paradise’. The construction of this mosque, which is one of the meritorious acts of the age and like a mole on a beautiful face, was ordered by our lord and master the *sulṭān*, son of the *Sulṭān* ʿĀdil Shāh, son of Mubārak Shāh, son of ʿĀdil Shāh, al-Fārūqī l-ʿUmarī l-ʿAdawī – may God perpetuate his kingdom and sovereignty, and spread his goodness and munificence all over the world – purely and sincerely for the sake of Allāh the Merciful and with the object of obtaining His great pleasure. May Allāh accept his pious actions through the holy Prophet and his companions and descendants! Its construction was commenced in the days of the Fārūqyya ʿĀdiliyya Kingdom, on Sat- urday, the fourth of the month of Shāʿbān,[92] in 992 AH, and was completed on the day …

Transliteration of the Sanskrit text:

(1) śrī kartṛpurūṣāya namaḥ | guṇātmane nirguṇāya vyaktāvyaktasvarūpiṇe cidānandāt- mane nityaṃ viśvādhārayate namaḥ | 1 | candrārkatārāgaṃgādi* tiṣṭhanti gagane bhuvi tāvat phārukivaṃśo ’sau*

(2) vimalo bhuvi tiṣṭhatu | 2 | *kṣaṃdrārkka-tārāgaṃgādi śrīmatphāruṣikulo hita-prīta- pratāpa-dinakara-mitra-jana-cakora-ānandakara-pūrṇacandro (?) nirguṇe sacintana*pa-rāyaṇapātaśāha śrī śrī Ādilaśāha bina Mubārakhaśāha bina

(3) Ādilaśāha vijayarājya śrīṣānadeśa *adhipateḥ || śrīvikramādityasamayātīta saṃvat 1641 varṣe śālavāhana (śālivāhana) kṛta śāke 1506 prakṛmine(?)* śrāvaṇama* śukala (śukra) paṣye (pakṣye) tithi 6 śani-dine citrā-naṣya (nakṣatre)

Translation of the Sanskrit text:

Let obeisance be paid to the creator of the world, the possessor of all qualities and yet destitute of them, manifest yet hidden, inherent in *citti* (mind) and *ānanda* (happi- ness), eternal, and upholder of the universe. May this pure Phāruki (Fārūqī) family endure on the earth as long as the sun, the moon, the stars, the Ganges and the like remain on heaven and earth. (Glorious) be the royal fortune of the *pādshāh*, ʿĀdil Shāh of the family of Phārushi,[93] son of Mubārak Shāh, son of ʿĀdil Shāh, the king of Khāndeś, (who is beneficial) to his people like the heat (of the sun)[or: the king’s splendour] is beneficial and beloved to the lotuses, and just as the full moon makes delight for the cakora birds, (and who is always) absorbed in meditation upon the Su-preme Being. (Written) on Saturday, the 6th of the bright half of the early (?) Śrāvaṇa[94] in the Citrā *nakṣatra*[95] of the Vikrama *saṁvat*, 1641, (corresponding to) 1506 of the Śālivāhana Śaka era.

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91 Verbatim translation; often, it is translated as ‘the nest of a sparrow’.

92 The eighth month of the Islamic calendar.

93 ष instead of क, probably a mistake. See fiuraishi 1925–1926b, 2, n. 1.

94 The fifth lunar month of the Hindu calendar.

95 That is, the fourteenth *nakṣatra* or lunar mansion according to Hindu astronomy.

The religious phrases from the Quran and Ḥadīth have not been translated into Sanskrit, but replaced by a call to obey God, who is then qualified by a number of characteristics. The two terms *citti* and *ānanda* could be taken from Advaita- Vedantic concepts. The wishes for the dynasty to last long have also been ex- pressed with images common in a Hindu environment. The king’s kindness towards his people is compared to the sun’s kindness towards the

lotus, and he is also considered a delight to his people, similar to the moon. He is said to be in constant meditation upon the Supreme Being.

In the Burhānpūr mosque, the design of both inscriptions is more sophis- ticated. The Arabic inscription consists of three lines. They are at the top, but due to the curvature of the arch, there is much less space for them; the first line in particular is very short. The letters are very elongated, so the single lines are significantly higher than the lines in Nāgarī below. The Sanskrit inscription is considerably longer: it not only fills six lines, but these lines also have more space, since they are less affected by the curvature of the arch. The *śirorekhā* or headline that is drawn above the Nāgarī letters is so thick that the vowel signs are not above it, but incised into it. Though this

visual effect, the vowel signs are more eye-catching. Most remarkably, in the middle of the third line from the top, a sign in the shape of the *tashdīd* (◌ّ) has been added. The *tashdīd* is used in Arabic to indicate the gemination of a consonant. No such sign is used or needed in Nāgarī. I therefore postulate that through the graphic design of the Nāgarī text, an assimilation to the Arabic script was attempted, with the *tashdīd* as the most obvious element, but also the eye- catching vowel signs as the counterpart of the Arabic vowel signs. The script would thus be the graphic realization of what is happening

in the text as well – a translation of Islamic concepts into terms and notions that were intelligible for Hindus.

The text of the Arabic inscription is very close to the one in Asīrgarh. The only major difference is that the genealogy of ʿĀdil Shāh is mentioned. The genealogy is likewise mentioned in the Sanskrit

version. The translation of Islamic concepts is similar to that of Asīrgarh, but the terminology is not exactly the same. The main factor in the length of the Sanskrit inscription is the very elabo- rate chronological data, indicating not only the date, but also the exact time the mosque began to be constructed.

Fig. 1: Sanskrit-Arabic inscription from the *qibla* wall of the *Jāmaʿ Masjid* in Burhanpur, ʿĀdil Shāhī dynasty, 1588–1589 (Arabic inscription) / 1590 (Sanskrit inscription); public domain.

Transliteration of the Sanskrit, last section:

L. 5 virjayaṃte bhūpālacūḍāmaṇiḥ ‖ 5 ‖ svasti śrī saṃvat 1646 varṣe śākre 1511 virodhi- saṃvatsare pauṣamāse śukl(v?)apakṣe 10 ghaṭi 23 sahaikā-daśyāṃ tithau some [kṛ?]ttikā- ghaṭī 33 rāha rohi -

L. 6 ṇayāṃ śubha ghaṭī 42 yoge vaṇijakaraṇesmin dine rātrigataghaṭī 11 samayo kanyālagna śrīmubārakhaśāhasutaśrī 7 edalaśāharājño masītiriyaṃ nirmitā svadharmapālanārthaṃ

Translation of the Sanskrit, last section:[96]

Hail! Prosperity! This mosque was built by the king Śrī Ādil Shāh, son of the illustrious Mubārakh Shāh, for fostering his own religion[97], in *saṁvat* (year) 1646, Śaka year 1511, in the year Virodhin,[98] in the month of Pauṣa, in the bright fortnight, on the 10th *tithi* (lunar day), 23 *ghaṭī*s before the 11th *tithi*, on Monday, in the Kṛttikā, 33 *ghaṭī*s before Rohīṇī,[99] in the Śubha yoga at 42 *ghaṭī*s, in the Vaṇija *karaṇa* (lunar half-day), at the time when 11 *ghaṭī*s of the night on this day had passed and in the Kanyā *lagna* (entrance of the sun in the sign of Virgo). This exact

information on the construction date was related to astrological cal- culations for finding the best such moment, the so-called *catarchai*. Since the exact moment is only indicated in Sanskrit, the calculations were obviously done by an Indian astronomer or astrologer.

By virtue of their length, their position on the *miḥrāb* wall, and their at- tempt to adapt the religious content to a Hindu context, these two inscriptions are very exceptional. Who were the addressees: Muslim converts who knew Sanskrit? Muslim converts who did not know Sanskrit, but should be accommo- dated with a familiar script? Local notables and Brahmans who came to visit the mosque, without being Muslims themselves? And who translated the text? At least in the Asīrgarh version, there are some mistakes – were they due to the translator, or rather the mason? Was the inscription produced by the same ma- son who also wrote the Arabic one, or were different masons employed? And why was the astrological information only given in Sanskrit – was it considered inappropriate to display it in Arabic on a religious building?

5.9 A bilingual inscription from Bilara in the

Bilara in the Jodhpur district and was prepared in the time of Shāh Jahān; it is in Persian and a local dialect, written in Nāgarī (no. 62). The text in Nāgarī is much larger and therefore more prominent than the Per- sian version. It refers to the construction of a tomb for the rulers of Jodhpur and of a well and indicates the cost of building them. This inscription is remarkable insofar as the Nāgarī text on top is divided into two halves by a T-shaped central field. This field is filled with Persian text, with the *basmala* in the upper bar of the T, and the name of the ruler, Shāh Jahān, and the year in the vertical bar. In the same hand, the main Persian text is placed below the Nāgarī inscription.

of Mahārāj Rāja Jaswant Singh (and) at the instance of Cho(udhary?) Lakhmī Dās, Choudharī … con- structed (?) the tomb… 2501 rupees were spent (on …), and on (?) Gangā spring, 1501 ru- pees. The stone carvers are Lād Muḥammad and Dūdā, and the supervisor Vīthā, son of Dārkā (Dwārkā?) (Verse:) After death, a good name will remain in the world. Only … will be in one's embrace (i.e. possession). The writer is the servant ʿĀrif Muḥammad.

Although the Nāgarī has not been fully read, it very much looks as if the Persian script has been written over the Nāgarī, both in the middle of the first line and the central part, and possibly also at the bottom of the slab. In the central part, single words are spread over two lines due to the shortness of the line. Since Persian words are usually not hyphenated, this clearly indicates that no Persian text was planned there. Given the fact that the Persian or Arabic version is typi- cally placed on top, and that the text has been arranged in such an unusual way, I assume that the original version of this inscription was in Nāgarī only, and that the Persian version was added later. The superimposition of some Per- sian text, and especially the placement of the *basmala* in the centre of the upper line, might have been a means to symbolically restore the normal order. The dates would contradict this interpretation, since the *saṁvat* date of the Nāgarī text – Āshāḍhā$_{100}$ 1696 – comes after Muḥarram 1049, the date indicated in the Persian version. But this could also be a deliberate misdating to give priority to the Persian text.

A bilingual inscription from the lower Swat valley

The last inscription to be considered also refers to the erection of a tomb and is one of the oldest inscriptions in the corpus (no. 3). It allegedly comes from Zalamkot, a place in the lower Swat valley. The languages used are Persian in Arabic script and Sanskrit in Śāradā script. The two texts are not of equal status: by its length, the line spacing and its placement at the top, the Persian text is dominant, while the Sanskrit text is secondary. On the left, it is aligned with the Persian inscription, while on the right, it does not adhere to the space limit. This is a consequence of the different writing directions of Persian and Sanskrit, but also of the limited space available at the bottom of the limestone slab.

Persian version:

(1) بسم الله الحمن الرحیم

(2) لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله

(3) بنا کرد [این]
مرکدرا امیر جلیل
امیر طوس(4)
ارسلان الجاذب
اطال الله بقاه تمام
کرد

(5) سپهبک خلیل
بک ابن کوتوال
احمد [ا]لبغر(6)
ادام الله دولته فی

ماه ذو القعده

(7) سال مر چهار صد یک بود

Translation of the Persian:

(1) In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

(2) There is no God but Allāh; Muḥammad is the Prophet of Allāh.

(3) This tomb was founded by the grand *amīr*, the governor of Ṭūs,

(4) Arsalān ul-Jādhib – may Allāh prolong his life. It was completed by

(5) the *sipahbak* (i.e. commander) Khalīlbak, son of the Kotwāl Aḥmad ul-Baghr –

(6) may Allāh perpetuate his fortune – in the month of Dhū l-Qaʿada;[101]

(7) the current (*marr*) year was 401.

No translation or transliteration of the Sanskrit text have been provided.

By the dates indicated in both languages, the inscription can be dated to the year 401 AH / 1011 CE. It is thus one of the oldest clearly datable attestations of Persian in Arabic script. Geographically, it can be related to the other earliest testimony of Persian in Arabic script, which has been found in today's Afghani- stan.[102] It thus provides further evidence of the use of the Arabic script in the eastern parts of Iran up to the border region with India. The early date of the inscription is probably the reason for some orthographic peculiarities, especial- ly the spelling of *markad* instead of *marqad* ('tomb'), although this variant is not attested to in the contemporary legal documents from Bamiyan.[103] The inscrip- tion consists of seven lines in Persian in Kufi script, and three lines of Sanskrit in Śāradā script. Unfortunately, only the Persian inscription has been tran- scribed and translated in full in the publication. It contains the Islamic creed (*shahāda*), the name of the governor of Tus who ordered the tomb to be built, and the name of the commander who had it completed. The name of the buried is not mentioned. The Persian text ends with the date; in the Sanskrit text, the date comes at the beginning and is indicated more precisely than in the Persian. The inscription is unusual insofar as it is one of very few bilingual tomb in- scriptions, but also since nothing about the dead person has been revealed. Neither his or her name, nor the date of his or her death have been mentioned, at least not in Persian. We can only speculate that the deceased had a local origin – was this the reason for adding some lines in Śāradā?

However, the inscription ends with the two benedictory and imprecatory sentences (ll. 7–9), of which the second has a corresponding image engraved on the stone. Accordingly, the image of a four-legged animal must represent an ass, which the father of a transgressor is destined to be reborn. The other point notable about this sentence is the word *punar*, 'again'. The withdrawal of endowment by Avŭdeva was deemed the first breach which should not be repeated, so that the word 'again' was added.

The last to say about the contents of the inscription is the absence of toponyms. There is no reference to place names of either the administrative unit, territory of Avŭdeva or localities where the concerned market or the *vihăra* were. This absence may point to the fixation of the inscribed slab to the *vihăra* itself, which made the indication of its location unnecessary. Both the

vihăra and market may have existed in proximity within the area controlled by Avŭdeva, so that the locations of all the three were obvious to the intended readers of the inscription.

Implications

The contents of the inscription have important implications for the early medieval history of Bengal, especially for the administration under the Varmans, the economic condition of the period and the possible presence of Islam and Muslims.

The present inscription is so far the sole record which gives a glimpse of the activity of subordinate rulers under the Varmans. In view of the title *păñcakulika* wielded by his father and the spread of his relatives in the other countries, Avŭdeva seems to have originated from a mercantile family and acquired the position of *mahăsămanta* through the service to the Varman king. This case can be compared with that of the lineage of *mahăsămanta* Bhadraṇăga serving the Păla king Dharmapăla: his great grandfather was a caravan trader (*sărthavăha*) and father a *mahăsămanta*.

What should be noted in the present case is the presence of *adhikŕta* Jīvasena between the king and his subordinate ruler. Though the content or unit of his administration (*vyăpăra*) is not clearly stated, the reference to it just after the reign of the king in the inscription suggests the jurisdiction of Jīvasena covering the territory of Avŭdeva. The formation of such an administration above subordinate rulers and the appointment of an official in charge of it points to the attempt of the Varman kings to keep control over their subordinate rulers.

The acts recorded in the inscription presupposed the developed condition of monetary economy. Monetary deposit in cowrie-shells was viable only with their circulation in abundance as currency. The assumed contribution to the fund by Avŭdeva's kinsmen living abroad attests to the sphere of circulation of this currency be- yond Bengal or the channels which could convert their wealth accumulated in different forms into it through exchange. The expected generation of profit through the management of fund by conch-shell workers, though failed in the present case, was conditioned by the existence of vibrant market economy in which their products circu- lated as commodity and could be sold for cash.

Such an economic condition can also be deduced from the second act, in which the right to tax from a market was transferred to a religious institution. Its transference as a substitute for withdrawn monetary endowment, or its assignment as a privilege of a subordinate ruler before that, was feasible only with vigorous commercial activities around the market. The trade network connecting the market with the other countries, which was conjectured from the activities of Avŭdeva's kinsmen, may have contributed to the thriving market economy.

Finally, the donor and donee of the present inscription can imply the presence of Islam and Muslims in the early medieval Bengal. The name of deity Allahabha??ărakasvămin could be composed of the transliteration of Allah suffixed with two titles denoting 'master', both typical of Brahmanical deities. With choice of *vihăra* as discussed above, he could be identified with the Islamic God. Accordingly, the donor could be a Muslim and the names of him and his father, Avŭdeva and Hăsī, the transliterations of Arabic or Persian ones. The presence of their kinsmen in the other countries, on the other hand, suggests their foreign origin. Hăsī may have come to and settled in Bengal as an Arab or Persian merchant engaging in trade activities.

The presence of Arab Muslims on the coastal area of western India in the early medieval period is well-attested by the inscriptional evidence. The Chinchani copperplate inscription of the time of the Ră??rakŭ?a king Indra III, dated year 848 Śaka Era (AD 926), mentions Madhumati, the son of Sahiyărahăra, of Tăjika lineage (*anvaya*) as a ruler (*nŕpati*) who was given Saṇyănamaṇďala from Kr?ṇarăja and conquered all the chiefs of harbours (Sircar 1957–8: 52, ll. 19–22, vv. 17– 19). He and his father were clearly Arabs with the Arabic and Persian names Muhammad and Shahriyar, which were transliterated in Sanskrit as such.[9] Similarly, a lineage of Arab ship-owners serving the Kadamba kings of Goa is known from the Panjim plates of Jayakeśin I, year 981 Śaka Era (AD 1059). There was ship-owner (*nauvittaka*)[10] Ăliyama born to Tăjiya lineage (*vamsa*) originating from Vaimŭlyapura. His son

was Madhumada, whose son Saḍhana served Keśirāja (Jayakeśin I) (Moraes 1931: 396, ll. 4–7). According to the other inscriptions, Madhumada or Madumod was a rich merchant of Goa who saved king Guhalladeva II with his wealth, when the ship of the latter stranded on the way to Somanātha for pilgrimage (Moraes 1931: 171–2). Saḍhana or Sadano, here mentioned as his grandson, served Guhalladeva II and Jayakeśin I and was appointed a governor of Konkan by the latter (Moraes 1931: 185).

The Veraval inscriptions of year AH 662/1320 Vikrama Era/945 Valabhī (Gupta) Era/151 Siṇha Era (AD 1264), on the other hand, attests to the establishment of Islamic institution by a Muslim merchant (Sircar 1960–1). It records the establishment of a *masjid* (*mijigitidharmasthāna*) at Somanāthadevapattana by *nakhuda* Noradīna Pīroja (Nuruddin Firuz), the son of *nauvittaka* Avŭvrāhima (Abu Ibrahim) from Hurmuja (Hormuz) (Sircar 1960–1: 147, ll. 10–11, 148, ll. 19–20).[11]

The case of Avŭdeva in the present inscription shows some similarities to these cases. Like Madhumati under the Rā??rakŭ?as and Saḍhana under the Kadambas of Goa, he could be an Arab Muslim with mercantile background who gained political power by serving a local dynasty and acquiring the position of a subordinate ruler. His establishment of a *vihāra*, or rather *madrasa*, of Allahabha??ārakasvāmin was comparable with the construction of a *mijigiti* by Noradīna Pīroja. The inclusion of the Bay of Bengal within the orbit of the Arab trade activities and the existence of ports like Samandar frequented by Arab merchants in the early medieval period also support this plausibility, even though the Bengal coast did not assume a premier position like the western coasts in the Indian Ocean trade (Chakravarti 2002a). If proved as such, the present inscription is the earliest to mention the activity of Muslims in Bengal.

The evidence is, however, yet decisive. Unlike the Chinchani and Panjim plates mentioning Tājika and Tājiya as lineages of Madhumati and Saḍhana, the present inscription has no comparable reference to the ethnic affiliation of Avŭdeva and Hāsī. The correspondence of their names with the Arabic or Persian counterparts needs to be established by the specialists of these languages. The location of their kinsmen is just vaguely stated as the other countries without any specification. Thus the evidence provided by the inscription is not enough to reach a conclusion beyond plausibility.

Concluding Remarks

In none of the inscriptions studied in this corpus is either text a verbatim trans- lation of the other. It is therefore more appropriate to speak about two versions of a text conveying, in most cases, the same message. Even in cases in which the texts do not vary significantly, each version follows its own stylistic norms. The majority of the inscriptions can be compared to what Taylor has described for Aramaic and Greek inscriptions from Palmyra, which he considers to be ‘inde- pendent products conforming to accepted conventions’.[104] These conventions can be understood from how the details of the dates are indicated; the position of the dates in the text; the gods who have been invoked; specific phrases that are included or omitted in the text, like e.g. the *basmala* or quotations from the Ḥadīth and Quran; blessings and imprecations; the indication of other or addi- tional people responsible for adherence to a *waqf* regulation; etc. Taylor speaks here of a ‘dynamic equivalence’,[105] which means that the text in one language is not repeated verbatim, but transposes the meaning to its own cultural context.

In the case of the inscriptions from Palmyra, Taylor concludes that the bi- lingual inscriptions were not translated, but produced by the same bilingual speaker.[106] For the corpus of bilingual inscriptions considered here, such a conclusion cannot generally be drawn, since it is much too heterogenous. At least for the Sanskrit-Persian bilingual inscriptions, it is highly improbable that they were composed by the same bilingual speaker, since we know from studies on translations from Sanskrit into Persian that they were produced by a team of Sanskrit and Persian experts, and that there was often even an intermediate language involved in the process of translation.[107] I also doubt that there were speakers of both Arabic and Sanskrit. The production of the inscriptions certain- ly followed various models in the different geographical and historical contexts, but one might imagine that an order to produce an inscription was issued to one expert in each language, with clear instructions about the content, upon which the expert was left to formulate an appropriate text fitting the conventions of the language and the culture associated with it. Although it is possible to categorize the inscriptions according to the scheme provided by Sohoni, this gives only a rough orientation, and I doubt that this scheme is very helpful in understanding the complexity of goals, interests, needs and conventions that influenced the production of these inscriptions. This can be achieved only by further examin- ing the historical and social circumstances of their creation in detailed studies for the different dynasties, epochs and regions. Joined editions of the different versions of the texts, together with high-quality images in a database like Sid- dham, would also be helpful. In spite of its brevity, the Sujanagar inscription has rich contents from which we can draw much information on the political, economic, and even religious structures and conditions of eastern Bengal in the middle of the twelfth century, as discussed above. The conclusions and possibilities offered in the present study, however, need to be buttressed by more evidences, which are especially required for the Islamic presence in early medieval Bengal suggested at the end of the previous section. Though the finding of the inscription by chance makes the possibility quite slim, the discovery of the structures of the concerned *vihăra* or the corresponding inscription in Arabic or Persian, like the case of the Veraval inscription (Sircar 1960–1: 149–50), through the excavation or exploration would change the situation drastically. I hope that further researches in the area around Sujanagar bring out new evidences which would enrich our discussion, no matter buttressing or rejecting the possibility raised by the present study.

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NOTES

1. His misidentification emanated from that of the earlier scholars about the image on the Mainamati plate of Vīradharadeva, as pointed out by Gouriswar Bhattacharya (Bhattacharya 2015).
2. The omission of the sign for long vowel *ă*, a vertical stroke to the right of *mma* can be attributed to the concentration of vertical strokes between *mma* and *te*, namely the vertical strokes of the first and second *ma* and the sign for vowel *e* to the left of *ta* following them.
3. Numbers in brackets indicate lines of the inscrip- tion.
4. For difference between solar and lunar dates, see (Sircar 1965a: 223–4).
5. I would like to thank Arlo Griffiths for reminding me of the first two references.
6. 'saṇ 100 60 9 vai(śăkha) śudi 8', Nandapur Plate (Sircar 1965b: 384, l. 19); '(a)??ame samvatsare śrăvaṇamăsasya tithau sitasaptamyăṇ', Kailan Plate of Śrīdhăraṇarăta (Sircar 1983: 38, ll. 26–7); 'samvat 8 candragatyă caitrakarmmadine 15', Manahali Plate of Madanapăla (Vasu 1900: 73, l. 49).
7. For monetary *ak?ayanivi*, see Maity 1970: 37–9.
8. For the word *kḷpta* denoting a kind of fixed tax in the *Kautiliya Arthasăstra* 2. 6. 10 and 2. 28. 2, and in some Văkă?aka inscriptions, see Olivelle 2015: 134; Sircar 1966: 159.
9. For the correspondence of Sahiyărahăra with Shahriyar, see Chakravarti 1990: 196.
10. For *nauvittaka* and *nakhuda/nakhoda*, their Arabic and Persian counterpart, as ship-owners engaging in the Indian Ocean trade, see Chakravarti 2000: 37–54.
11. For discussion on the inscription and its implications, see Chakravarti 2002b.

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Appendix: List of inscriptions

No. 1

Year: 5th regnal year of King Sthanu Ravi [849–850 CE]
Names: Ayyanadikal; Tiruvadikal; Sthanu Ravi; Mar Sapir Iso *Location*: Kollaṁ, Kerala
Languages: Tamil, with Hebrew, Arabic and Middle Persian *Material aspects*: Vaṭṭeḻuttu, Pahlavi, Kufic and Hebrew scripts *Context*: Copper plate
Content: Conferring of rights and privileges to Christian merchants
Salient features: Main text in Tamil, other languages and alphabets used for signatures

References: Tintu 2019

No. 2

Year: 13 Jumādā I 243 AH; (39)32 Śāstra or Laukika era [857 CE]

Location: Tochi valley, North Waziristan

Languages: Arabic and Sanskrit

Material aspects: Kufic, Śāradā and Nāgarī; all engraved; Arabic on top, same size

Context: Out of context, Peshawar Museum

Content: Building inscription

Salient features: Sanskrit text with dating only, incomplete

References: fiuraishi 1925–1926a, 27–28 and pl. XI b; Harmatta 1966, 427–448; Humbach 1966, 11–18

No. 3

Year: Dhū l-Qaʿda 401 AH; Saṃvat 189; 1 Āśaḍha-vadi [1011 CE]
Names: Arsalān al-Jādhib (governor of Ṭūs); Khalīlbak; Ghaznavid
Location: Zalamkot, lower Swat valley
Languages: Persian and Sanskrit
Material aspects: Kufic and Śāradā, both engraved
Context: Tomb; currently in Peshawar Museum
Content: Construction of a tomb by two governmental functionaries
Salient features: Oldest Persian inscription in Arabic script; Sanskrit text not edited and

translated; name of deceased not mentioned

References: Rahman 1998

No. 4

Year: 27 Ramaḍān 662 AH; Saṃvat 1320; 13 Āśaḍha-vadi; 945 Valabhī; 151 Siṁha [1264 CE]

Names: Nākhudā Fīrūz; Arjunadeva, king of Gujarat; Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad; Amīr Rukn ud-Dīn, ruler of Hormuz

Location: Prabhaṣ Patan/Somnath, Gujarat

Languages: Arabic and Sanskrit

Material aspects: Engraved on two separate black granite stones

Context: Mosque; texts since relocated to the wall of another mosque and a temple

Content: Building of a mosque; waqf

Salient features: Details of waqf in Sanskrit; translation of Allah into Hindu concepts

References: Hultzsch 1882; Desai 1961, 10–15 and pl. II b; Sircar 1961–1962, 141–150;

Chattopadhyaya 1998, 70–78; Thapar 2008, 88–99; Sheikh 2014, 190–191

No. 5

Year: 1 Ramaḍān 669 AH [1271 CE]

Names: Nuṣrat Khān; Ghiyāth ud-Dīn Balban

Location: Bayana, Bharatpur, Rajasthan

Languages: Persian and Sanskrit

Material aspects: Naskh Sanskrit inscription on the back of the tablet

Context: Well belonging to Goculchandramājī temple in Kāman

Content: Clearance and renewed digging of a well that had been filled with stones

Salient features: Sanskrit not edited or translated

References: Yazdani 1937–1938a, 5–6 and pl. III a

No. 6

Year: 1 Muḥarram 704 AH; Saṃvat 1360; 2 Bhādrapada-vadi [1304 CE]

Names: Rāi Karna Deva Vāghelā; Balchaq; Shādī; Tāj ud-Dīn Ḥasan (Khaljī period)

Location: Sāmpā, 45 km from Vaḍodara, Gujarat

Languages: Persian and Sanskrit

Material aspects: Naskh, Nāgarī; Persian on top; both incomplete

Context: Close to a pond; no edifice left

Content: Endowment for the village of Sāmpā for the mosque of Kambāyat; in- vocation to abide to the terms

Salient features: Sanskrit similar to Persian; Sanskrit version invokes Rānās to honour and execute the gift

References: Desai 1975a, 13–20 and pl. II a; Sheikh 2014, 191–192

No. 7

Year: (720 AH); Śaka 1242 [1320 CE]

Names: Revaiya/Rībya; Karīm ud-Dīn; Quṭb ud-Dīn Khaljī

Location: Bijapur, Karnataka

Languages: Persian and Marathi

Material aspects: Nāgarī, Persian; Persian in hesitant script

Context: Malik Karīm ud-Dīn mosque; Marathi on a pillar in the north wall; Per- sian on the second pillar in second row from the north

Content: Building of the mosque; mentions the carpenter who built it and his remuneration

Salient features: Marathi version much more detailed than Persian version; date indicated only in Marathi

References: Nazim 1936, 25; Sohoni 2022, 8–9

No. 8

Year: 20 Dhū l-Ḥijja (723 AH); Saṃvat 1380; 7 Pausa-vadi [1323 CE]

Names: Bābā Arjun Shāh; Hājī Ismāʿīl; ʿUthmān of Shiraz; Ghiyāth ud-Dīn Tughluq

Location: Petlad, Anand district, Gujarat

Languages: Persian and Sanskrit

Material aspects: Naskh, Nāgarī

Context: In the tomb of Bābā Arjun; originally in the vicinity of the tomb

Content: Dedication of a well; grant

Salient features: In the Sanskrit version, the *thakkura*s are asked to protect the gifts

References: Yazdani 1915–1916, 16–18 and pl. XIV b; Sheikh 2014, 201–202

No. 9

Year: 25 Dhū l-Qaʿda 740 AH [1340 CE]

Names: Mokha Mehta; Malik Muẓaffar Sulṭān; Muḥammad b. Tughluq

Location: Karkhaḍi, Vaḍodara district, Gujarat

Languages: Persian and Sanskrit

Material aspects: Naskh, Nāgarī; Sanskrit in more lines

Content: Construction of a mosque and a well

Salient features: Sanskrit has more details

References: Gyani 1944, 1–2 and pl. 1; Sheikh 2014, 193–194

No. 10

Year: 1 Rabīʿ I 765 AH; Saṃvat 1420; 1286 Śaka; 14 Mārgaśīrṣa-vadi [1363 CE]

Names: Bāmdev, son of Nathū; Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq

Location: Originally from Sambhar, Jaipur district, Rajasthan; today in Archaeo- logical Museum, Amber, Jaipur, Rajasthan

Languages: Persian and Sanskrit

Material aspects: Naskh, Nāgarī; Persian in relief, Nāgarī incised and in very poor condition; Sanskrit much smaller and below the Persian

Context: Fixed on a well outside the town of Sambhar

Content: Construction of a step well

Salient features: In Sanskrit; invocation of Varuna at the beginning

References: Bukhari 1955–1956, 57–59 and pl. XV a

No. 11

Year: 15 Safar 779 AH [1377 CE]

Names: Nākhudā Ghafūr, son of Nākhudā Aḥmad

Location: Originally probably from the west coast, somewhere to the north of Mumbai; today in Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) museum, Mumbai

Languages: Arabic; mixture of Marathi and Gujarati; Portuguese insignia on the back

Material aspects: Arabic in verses in Naskh

script, carved in relief, illegible; Nāgarī throughout the lower fourth, incised, text width broader than for the Arabic part

Context: Removed from original position by the Portuguese

Content: Epitaph, indicating the name of the deceased

Salient features: Only Sanskrit version read and translated; Perso-Arabic portion badly damaged

References: Desai 1957–1958, 12–13 and pl. IV a; Sohoni 2022, 9

No. 12

Year: (784 AH) [1382–1383 CE]

Names: Dungar; Tikam; Natha; Punji, the mother of Dungar

Location: Sathod, Vaḍodara district, Gujarat *Languages*: Persian, Old Gujarati, Sanskrit *Material aspects*: Naskh, Nāgarī; versified Sanskrit

Content: Repair of a step well; grant of land for the maintenance of the well *Salient features*: Genealogy of brothers in Sanskrit; different curses in the three languages

References: Sheikh 2014, 202–204

No. 13

Year: 797 AH; Saṃvat 1452 (15 Vaiśākha-vadi) [1394–1395 CE]

Names: Malik Yaʿqūb at-Tamīmī; Nuṣrat Shāh; Qāḍī Badr Rāṇig, son of Virdha- vala; Tughluq period

Location: Mangrol, Junagadh district, Gujarat

Languages: Persian in verse; Sanskrit in prose *Material aspects*: Persian arranged in four columns; Sanskrit below; scripts in about the same size; Persian in relief; Sanskrit incised

Context: Small room at the Gādī gate, today at the record office of Mangrol

Content: Construction of two iron doors for the two gates

Salient features: No translation of the Sanskrit text; Persian begins with the creation of earth; Sanskrit text indicates who wrote the Torki (= Persian) text and who engraved the Sanskrit text

References: Desai 1962, 34–37 and pl. XI a; Diskalkar 1939–1940, 592–593;

Sheikh 2014, 192–193

References:
Sheikh 2014,
204

No. 14

Year: (807 AH) [1404–1405 CE]

Names: Amir Nathu, son of Takhir; Ẓafar Khān, son of Wajīh ul-Mulk; Malik Adam b. Sulaimān

Location: Vaḍodara, Gujarat

Languages: Persian and Sanskrit

Material aspects: Not indicated

Context: At the entrance of a well; today at the entrance of the Jamiʿ mosque

Content: Construction of a step well

Salient features: Not indicated

No. 15

Year: 14 Shawwāl 810 AH; 27 Rabīʿ I 811 AH; Saṃvat 1464; 2 Caitra-vadi; 13 Śrāvana-vadi [1408 CE]

Names: Faḍlallāh Aḥmad; Abū Rajā; Muẓaffar Shāh, sultan of Gujarat

Location: Veraval, Gir Somnath district, Gujarat

Languages: Persian (prose) and Sanskrit

Material aspects: Sanskrit below Persian, much smaller

Context: Inner face of the west wall of the mortuary of a small tomb of Maghrībī Shāh; not *in situ*

Content: Construction of a city wall and guard-room

Salient features: Sanskrit contains mostly dates and names

References: Desai 1953–1954a, 50–52 and pl. XV a; Diskalkar 1939–1940, 598–599; Sheikh 2014, 194

No. 16

Year: (811–812 AH) [1409 CE]

Names: Zheng He

Location: Galle, Sri Lanka; today in Colombo National Museum

Languages: Tamil, Persian and Chinese

Material aspects: Tamil at the top left; Persian at the bottom left; Chinese in the right portion of the slab; two dragons facing each other carved at the top *Context*: Made in Nanjing and carried to Sri Lanka; placed in a temple

Content: Offerings of the Chinese emperor to a god/saint in Sri Lanka; list of offerings

Salient features: Beneficiary of the offerings is different in each language *References*: Siddham database, https://siddham.network/object/ob03125/ (accessed on 4 September 2023)

No. 17

Year: 15 Muḥarram 847 AH [1443 CE]

Names: Muḥammad Shāh

Location: Vaḍodara district, Gujarat

Languages: Persian and Sanskrit

Material aspects: With figures of animals engraved at the top; Persian (in Naskh) much longer

Context: Pillar, originally from Sathod *Content*: Order of remission of certain taxes

Salient features: Sanskrit not edited

References: Desai 1963, 22–23 and pl. VII a

No. 18

Year: 14 Jumādā II 848 AH; Śālivāhan Śaka 1366, 10 Aśvin-śudi [1444 CE]

Names: Makhdūma-yi Jahān Bībī Shahnāz; Maḥmūd Khān; ʿAlā ud-Dīn Aḥmad Bahmānī

Location: Bidar, Karnataka; today in the Telangana State Archaeology Museum, Hyderabad

Languages: Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit

Material aspects: Naskh in relief; Nāgarī engraved; prose and verse; Sanskrit much longer

Context: Step well

Content: Construction of a step well for public use

Salient features: Sanskrit version has much more information, *inter alia* about a conflict within the royal family

References: Desai 1959–1960, 33–34 and pl. VIII a; Joshi 1959–1960, 38–40; Datta and Suri 1962, 81–84 and pl. XXVI

No. 19

Year: 11 Dhū l-Qaʿda 859 AH [1067 CE]

Names: Quṭb ud-Dīn Aḥmad II, sultan of Gujarat

Location: Prabhaṣ Patan, Gir Somnath district, Gujarat

Languages: Persian and Sanskrit

Material aspects: Naskh, Nāgarī; Naskh much more prominent; Sanskrit small and at the bottom; Naskh in relief; Sanskrit incised

Context: Inner face of the city wall, to the left of the Moṭā Darwāza

Content: Order by the sultan to put a stop to the oppression of the public by some officials

Salient features: Sanskrit considered illegible; in Persian, admonition of Mus- lims and non-Muslims not to commit illegal acts

References: Desai 1955–1956a, 94–96 and pl. XXVI b; Sheikh 2014, 196–197

No. 20

Year: 15 Rabīʿ I 862 AH; Saṃvat 1514; 2 Śrāvaṇa-vadi [1458 CE]

Names: Malik Asad; Quṭb ud-Dīn Aḥmad II, sultan of Gujarat

Location: Museum of Pasnavada, close to Prabhaṣ Patan; Gir Somnath district, Gujarat

Languages: Persian and Sanskrit

Material aspects: Nāgarī

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Salient features: Sanskrit version more informative than Persian; indicates names of artisans

References: Desai 1955–1956a, 96–99; Sanskrit version in Watson 1879, 183; Sheikh 2014, 194–195 (no plate)

No. 21

Year: 862 AH [1457–1458 CE]

Names: Humāyūn Shāh Bahmānī

Location: Gulbarga, Gulbarga district, Karnataka

Languages: Persian and Sanskrit

Material aspects: Naskh and Nāgarī; Persian in relief, Sanskrit incised; Sanskrit much smaller than Persian

Context: Eastern wall of the Bāolī Qalandar Shāh, Gulbarga

Content: Construction of a step well

Salient features: Sanskrit version mentions Ijalidevi as builder; Sanskrit not edited or translated

References: Kadiri 1964, 40–41 and pl. XIII b

No. 22

Year: 862 AH; Saṃvat 1514; 2 Śrāvaṇa-vadi [1458 CE]

Names: Quṭb ud-Dīn Aḥmad

Location: Darbar Hall Museum (?), earlier Rasul Khanji Museum, Junagadh

Languages: Persian and incorrect Sanskrit

Material aspects: Thulth in relief; Nāgarī; Nāgarī in much smaller characters

Content: Construction of a *mīnār* in Sulṭānpūr

Salient features: Sanskrit inscription mentions the earlier name Deopattan

References: Yazdani 1935–1936a, 48–49 and pl. XXXV b; Yazdani 1939–1940, 47

No. 23

Year: (887 AH); Saṃvat 1540; 5 Phālguna-vadi [1482 CE]

Names: Mahmūd Shāh, king of Malwa

Location: Bhonrasa, Bhopal district, Madhya Pradesh

Languages: Persian and Hindi with a few words in defective Sanskrit

Material aspects: Naskh; Nāgarī of a late

period; writing style crude in both languages; both texts of equal size; Persian at the top

Context: Stone post near the main gate

Content: Text only partially preserved; remission of taxes

Salient features: In Hindi version, revival of worship and sin of killing cows is mentioned

References: Saksena 1937–1938, 23–26 and pl. VII a

of a city

No. 24

Year: 893 AH; Saṃvat 1545; Śaka 1410; 13 Vaiśākha-śudi [1488 CE]

Names: Maḥmūd Begarhā Āṣaf, Malik ush-Sharq Maḥmūd Shāh b. Shāh b. Maḥmūd Shāh

Location: Mahamuda, Dohad district, Gujarat

Languages: Arabic (with some Persian phrases) and Sanskrit

Material aspects: Naskh, in relief; date given in figure; Nāgarī, in verse, en- graved; both versions on two different slabs

Context: Basket Bond Dohad

Content: Genealogy of Gujarat sultans; Maḥmūd's deeds and conquests; com- pletion